

With the D. Illustrations

OF

# MODERN MESMERISM

FROM PERSONAL INVESTIGATION

BY

JOHN FORBES, M.D. F.R.S.

PHYSICIAN TO HER MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD.

All my Reports go with the modest truth ;  
Nor more, nor clipp'd, but so.

*K. Lear, iv. 7.*

LONDON:

JOHN CHURCHILL, PRINCES STREET.

MDCCCXLV.

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ILLUSTRATIONS  
OF  
MODERN MESMERISM.

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## PREFACE.

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I HAVE been so often requested—and from so many quarters—to reprint the following Papers for general circulation, that I have, at length, consented to do so. Where they originally appeared, in the pages of a strictly professional Journal, (the London Medical Gazette,) they were seen by few but medical readers; and my friends are pleased to think that they are calculated to interest and to be of some service to many persons of other classes.

The Papers are reprinted *verbatim*, and with no other addition than two or three short notes and a new Post-

script to the *Third Series*. I make no apology for any repetitions they contain, nor for other imperfections of style which will be found in them. Knowing the original Reports to be accurate as to matters of fact, I was naturally unwilling, for the sake of mere polish, to run any risk of diminishing their value in the only point in respect of which I claimed some merit for them.

My reasons for appending the case of Miss Martineau's J., as an additional illustration, will be found in the text.

How far the anticipations of my friends are correct, as to the more general interest likely to be taken in these Papers,—remains to be seen; but, slight as they are, I am disposed to believe that they may be of some benefit not merely to the public, but to the Mesmerists themselves. If received simply as specimens or illustrations of the sort of things which mesmeric professors daily hold forth to the world, and which the world receives, as marvels of the highest order and as truths



admitting of no question, they must, surely, give rise to reflections that may lead to some beneficial results.

If the professors, on further consideration of the subject, do not condescend to supply the public with evidence of a more satisfactory kind, the public must cease to be satisfied with the kind of evidence they do supply.

Every one who has paid attention to the proceedings of professed mesmerists,—even those of the highest class, the members of the medical profession,—must now be thoroughly convinced of the absolute necessity of their changing the plan they have hitherto pursued, if they expect to see mesmerism regarded as a branch of human knowledge deserving the attention of scientific men. So long as they refuse to adopt the rigid system of observation required in the sciences, and repudiate all the ordinary rules of induction and rational inference deemed essential to establish facts in other departments of knowledge, they have no right to quarrel with those who persist in disbelieving—or who, at least, refuse to admit as truths,—things, most marvellous in themselves,

which, if true, are, to say the least, in nowise proved to be so, and which, for the most part, have no other evidence in their favour than the bare assertions of ignorant, interested, and, it may be, very unprincipled persons. No one conversant with these proceedings, as hitherto conducted, can deny that few, if any, of the greatest marvels recorded by the mesmerists, and promulgated as unquestionable facts, repose on more sound foundations than, before trial, seemed to support those which the investigations detailed in the following pages proved to be utterly baseless and false. As *all*, then, *may* be untrue, are we not authorised to demand a new course of inquiry, or a new series of evidences, before we are called upon to admit the truth of Clairvoyance and the other transcendental phenomena of mesmerism? Are we not justified, for the future, in refusing to receive from the mesmerists marvellous statements as truths and facts, unless it is, at the same time, proved to be *impossible* to explain or account for them, on other, ordinary, or what may be called natural principles?

It is also hoped, that the perusal of the exposures

contained in this little book, may teach a useful lesson to those numerous unscientific persons, who are accustomed to attend mesmeric exhibitions, public or private, from motives of rational curiosity, or with the commendable object of investigating what seem important truths. Such persons, it is believed, must now feel convinced that no reliance whatever is to be placed on the results presented at such exhibitions, as evidencing the truth and powers of mesmerism. As these results are witnessed by the ordinary visitor, it is quite impossible to discriminate the true from the false. The coarsest jugglery may pass with the honest spectator, seated at a distance from the scene of action, for mysterious and awful truths. If Herr Döbler and Monsieur Phillippe can puzzle and perplex a whole theatre, surely George Goble may bamboozle the erudite captain and the six ladies on Mr. Vernon's back seats !

In conclusion, I wish explicitly to state, that it formed no part of the object with which these papers were drawn up, to judge or prejudge the great question of the truth or falsehood of MESMERISM viewed generally ; nor is it

my intention, on the present occasion, to offer any opinion as to the possibility or impossibility of CLAIRVOYANCE, and the other mesmeric wonders. I have not denied their possibility, or even their existence as matters of fact. I still profess myself ready to believe them on obtaining sufficient proof of their reality. All that I profess to have done is, by a simple narrative of facts, to illustrate the actual pretensions and performances of the Mesmerists of the present day, and to show on what sandy foundations the popular belief in their marvels rests.

J. F.

*London, Nov. 1, 1845.*

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# ILLUSTRATIONS OF MESMERISM.

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## First Series.

### ALEXIS.

HEARING from all quarters of the wonderful feats of the youth Alexis in mesmeric divination, and especially of his facile and unlimited power in *clairvoyance*, I was naturally desirous, with others, of personally witnessing his performances, and of having my doubts settled on a matter of such extreme curiosity and importance. I felt happy in the opportunity thus afforded, of being enabled to come to a satisfactory conclusion so readily and so easily; as it appeared from the accounts of him, promulgated through all the channels of communication, that Alexis had few or none of those difficulties in demonstrating his powers, which are constantly interfering with the performances of other professors of the same school. He “came, *saw*, and conquered,” and all else who came—saw and were conquered. He held his daily

and nightly *sittings*, in public and private, to the number of three or four each day, at the rate of five guineas per sitting. He was "the rage" in all the aristocratic circles,

" Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,  
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
Rain influence, and judge the prize."

He was, of course, the pet, pride, and glory of all professed mesmerists, and his triumphs even comprehended some sober men of science who, like myself, were simply desirous of ascertaining the truth. With them, I considered all the alleged phenomena of mesmerism as, at least, deserving investigation; and, like them, I only wanted positive proofs of its truth to believe it. Regarding *clairvoyance* as the *major* marvel, including all *minor* marvels, I was prepared to admit other things without examination, if this, on examination, proved a true thing. But, of course, I required *evidence* before I admitted the truth of what was in itself so very wonderful; and I submit to the most zealous believers in mesmerism, whether there was anything in the proceedings, as detailed in the following notes, inconsistent with the plain and honest search after truth. The results, as will be seen, were anything but satisfactory; and while they proved nothing in favour of mesmerism, they proved, I fear, that these professors of it are not to be trusted as faithful promulgators of what ought to be scientific truths:

" There are no tricks in plain and simple faith."

At the same time, I think it necessary to repeat here



what I have stated in the notes, that mesmerism may be true while its professors are false; that negative results must, of course, give way to positive ones; and that I, for one, am still unconvinced that *clairvoyance* has not existed, and does not exist, merely because Alexis, on these occasions, failed to show it. I require no other proofs of its existence than are deemed essential in every other department of natural science; but while these are denied me it is no fault of mine that I remain a septic.

#### FIRST EXHIBITION.

The exhibition to which the following memoranda refer took place at a small concert-room in Mortimer-Street, on Thursday, July 11, 1844, from half-past twelve to two p.m. There were from thirty to forty persons present. The performer (Alexis) was thrown into a state of so-called somnambulism, by his friend, M. Marcillet, merely looking steadfastly at him while seated in a chair. With the exception of the first experiment, during which Alexis seemed to be asleep, all the others were performed while he seemed to a common observer to be awake, with his eyes (when not bandaged) partially open. He appeared to see, hear, and know what was going on about him, just as any of the spectators. The only peculiarity that struck me was, that the eyelids were only partially open and occasionally quivering.

The following notes were written *immediately* after the meeting. If there be any inaccuracies in them, they certainly do not regard matters of any importance.

1. The left arm was extended in a state of rigidity, not opposing *very* great resistance to downward pressure. The pulse smaller in the rigid arm.—Any one could do this.

2. The legs extended in the same way. A gentleman *partially* stood on them, but not entirely.—Any one could do this with practice.

3. Playing at *écarté* with the eyes bandaged. He seemed to play readily and well, winning the game. He also told the cards at times in the partner's hand; but he also repeatedly failed, and made glaring mistakes in his guesses.

The whole of this experiment is vitiated by the doubt as to whether he could see under the bandage. From carefully and most closely watching him, I am of opinion that he saw or might see from under the bandage. I particularly remarked that while the bandages were being placed, he repeatedly touched and shifted them; and before they were removed, I observed, most distinctly, that he pressed a knuckle forcibly over the bandage into the hollow of each eye, *as if to close the leather that might have been removed*. I also observed, that when examining some body presented to him, before the bandages were removed, he placed the body *to one side of him*, exactly as a person would do who was trying to see through a difficult passage.

At any rate, the (to me) evident *possibility* of sight being exercised in the ordinary way, totally vitiates this card-playing as an experiment.\*

4. The next experiment, after the bandages were removed, was reading in a book *through* a certain number of pages, *i.e.*, telling *what words* (two or three) would be found opposite a certain point indicated on the open page, some pages farther on. The experiment was performed on a French book produced from the pocket of a gentleman present, and was repeated three, four, or five times. Being close to Alexis the whole time, and watching him most carefully, and all his proceedings, I

\* I have been accused of doing injustice to Alexis, at these exhibitions, in not attaching more importance to his feats of *card-playing*, some of which, certainly, appeared not a little remarkable. But I advisedly reject all such feats as evidence in a case of this kind; and I think every honest and philosophical mesmerist will admit, on due consideration, that they ought to be so rejected. The very fact of *cards* being, time out of mind, the favorite field for the display of the *tricks* of the conjuror, ought alone to determine their exclusion from an investigation pretending to a scientific character. The objection made in the text, of the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of demonstrating the perfect exclusion of vision through the natural channels, in the case of playing with the eyes bandaged in the manner adopted by M. Mareillet, I still hold to be most just. The other performances without bandages, such as playing with the cards turned down, or with a screen interposed, are so complex, and obviously involve so many chances of fallacy, that it would be most unphilosophical to accept them in evidence, so long as evidence of a like kind, and of a character entirely unexceptionable, can be readily obtained. Seeing to play at cards, with bandaged eyes, or with the cards reversed, and seeing to read through the pages of books, differs, in no respect, in principle, from seeing through sealed envelopes, closed boxes, or other opaque bodies; and as the latter can admit of no doubt or controversy, they ought alone to be employed.

am bound to declare that the result was altogether inconclusive as to his possessing the power pretended.

*a.* In the first place, in no instance were the words named by him exactly under the point indicated on the open page. He hunted over many pages, and was satisfied (as were many of the spectators) if he found the word named *anywhere*, in any part of the page!

*b.* Secondly, I distinctly observed, *in every case*, that *before* naming the word or words, he turned over the leaves (apparently carelessly and heedlessly, but with his eyes never removed from them) in such a manner that it was the easiest thing in the world for a person of ordinary sight to see *sideways* into the pages, and thus to catch words. This fact, coupled with the other just stated (*a*), utterly vitiates this experiment. It is also obvious that only *the first* of the experiments *could* be valid, as in searching for the *first words* he had the opportunity of fixing in his mind as many words as he pleased for the subsequent trials. And I observed that he would only look at those parts of the book which he had turned over.

5. The next set of experiments referred to his power of reading words wrapped up in paper, boxes, &c., and of generally indicating the contents of certain bodies presented to him.

The following were some of the experiments and their results :

*a.* A gentleman (I believe Colonel Gurwood) presented to him something very loosely wrapped in paper. He felt it, and said it was a box (*boite*). He then him-

self removed the paper, and laid the apparent box (a small octagonal body with gilt top,) down on the table. He was then asked what it contained: he said, "some characters in writing." While he was saying this (or previously, I do not now recollect which) he had *perfect opportunity*, as the object lay before him and was touched by him, and was constantly looked at by him; I say he had a perfect opportunity of *opening the book* (for such it was), so that he *might* see the characters within it. I cannot say positively that he *did* open it, but anybody, not a juggler, *might* have done so unobserved. He then announced that it was some writing in characters he did not understand. The book proved to be a copy of the Koran in Arabic. This experiment was clearly a failure: first, because *while covered* he declared the *book* to be a *box*; and, secondly, when the paper was removed, there was, to say the least, no *impossibility* of seeing the contents in the natural way.

b. A slip of folded paper was given him. He examined it most closely, putting it to his chest, mouth, &c., and seemed to me cautiously looking for an opportunity of unfolding it, as he turned it over and over, and partially opened it, more than once. My eye was, however, so constantly fixed on his proceedings, that he could not open it unseen, and he did not open it. After an infinite deal of manœuvring, and asking many questions of the lady who gave it him, as if desirous of obtaining some help from her answers, he resigned it, and fairly said he could *not* read.

c. Another paper (or it might be the same) he pro-

ceeded with in the same way, now often stating, inquiringly, the number of letters (which constantly varied, he sometimes saying six, eight, four, and so on). At last he said it was very difficult, *because it was folded on itself (plié sur lui-même)*. He returned it to the lady that it might be unfolded. I went and saw it opened by the lady; *it was not in the least folded*. It was a boldly written word, either “*Londres*” or “*Angleterre*,” I forget which.

d. One of these packets, while manipulating (I now recollect it was the one I saw opened by the lady), he pricked through with a pin, saying “*he pricked the dot of the i,*” and then “*the i itself.*” When opened, the word contained no *i*!

e. A lady (evidently a strong believer, and very friendly to Alexis) put herself in *rappor*t with him, and produced a large box like an overgrown card-case, or a case for holding a small prayer-book (opening like a card-case in the middle.) He took it in his hands and felt it, and turned it about. He was asked what it contained; he said, after a brief pause, something *gilded (doré)*, and then said, a watch (*montre*), and added, that “*what was curious, the glass was broken.*” The lady was surprised at this, and said it was *not* broken when she gave it him. On opening the box by drawing off the top, sure enough there was a watch on one side, *with the glass next the outside*, and the glass was broken! Nothing could be clearer than that he *might* have broken the glass through the yielding case, or felt the broken glass, or heard or felt the watch *tick* (if it was going, which I

cannot assert,) and thus come at once to know that it was a watch, and a watch with a broken glass! I believe this was the fact; but, at any rate, it must be admitted that such a clear-seeing as this *might* have been accomplished by anybody, and therefore the experiment goes for nothing.

*f.* I had taken half a dozen boxes, and folded papers and sealed envelopes, each containing a French word, so wrapped up as that it was *impossible* to see into them with ordinary eyes. These lay on the table all the time, and I had repeatedly pressed on M. Marcillet to let him try one of them. But some excuse was always made. Meantime, a gentleman came forward with his two hands closed, and requested to be informed what they contained. Alexis took the hands, turned them round, and *I saw him distinctly separate them a little*, so that he *might* have seen what they contained, at least the *colour* of it. He first said it is a *small thing*. The gentleman said, of course, or it could not be contained within the hands. Alexis then said, it is of a *reddish* or *darkish* colour, “and *if broken (cassé,) white inside.*” After a long time, and trying very hard by leading questions, to find out something about it, he said it contained *writing* or *printing* (I forget which;) that there was a large word with five letters in the centre, and some *arrangement of lines* which I now forget. After a long time the hands were opened, and were found to contain a small morocco pocket-book, which was certainly reddish outside, and had some white paper and some printed or engraved cards inside. At this time I forget what was on the cards, but



I am certain that the “chief” word of five letters was *not* there, and the lines were *not* arranged as Alexis had said. This experiment I regard as also a failure in every respect, except that there *was* something *white* inside. The red colour outside might have been seen ; the *white* was POSSIBLY a guess ; at any rate, the other mistakes committed are sufficient to neutralise this small success, to say the least of it. I therefore maintain that this experiment *proves* nothing.

*g.* At length, after many attempts, I succeeded in getting a lady (a friend of Alexis, and favoured by him) to take one of my *boxes*, and put him to the test in my own way. She was put *en rapport* with him, but he would not attempt to read the word written within upon finding that *she* did not know what it was. She then went to one side of the room to examine the word, and I just arrived near her in time to see her take from the box the word, and look at it, *surrounded by many of the company*. *This was done openly* ; and though I at once felt that this circumstance was sufficient to vitiate the experiment—as it was *quite possible*, and, indeed, *extremely probable*, that some of Alexis’s *friends* might see it wholly or partially, and make him acquainted with it—I still begged the lady to allow me to replace the word in such a manner that it could not easily be seen even if the top of the box (a small paper wafer-box) were removed. Well, she returned to Alexis, and gave him the box. He looked at it long, and at last said inquisitively, “ *un mot de cinq lettres* ;” then seven, then eight, and at last *five* again, adding, “ I am now sure it is five.” I



begged her not to tell ; and partly succeeded, though it was obvious she was desirous of *helping* him all she could. At last, he said the word ends with the letters *-ion*, and tried hard to get the lady to help him out with the rest. If I had not constantly interfered, I saw clearly that he would have bothered or bamboozled her out of them. He then wrote on a paper *-ion*, then tried several prefixes to suit, and at last seemed to settle on *motion*, or some word like this, but one certainly ending in *-tion*. Two o'clock having now arrived, I was obliged to depart before the box was opened, but I was thoroughly satisfied that some one of his *friends* had had a glimpse of my word (it was in *large print*,) and had told this to him. It was, however, a word not of five, or six, or eight letters, but one of *ten*, viz. *discussion*.

The conduct of Alexis, throughout, was altogether that of a man who was playing a deceptive part, and looking in all directions for help in his efforts to succeed in what was given him to do. In all his attempts to read the words inclosed in envelopes, he invariably made, in the first place, inquiring guesses as to the word being in writing or print, and especially as to the number of letters ; and he and his friends made unconcealed attempts to wheedle the party who gave the word, into conceding something so as to help him in solving the problem. " It is a word of five letters—eh ? " " Is it a word of six ?—No—it is—, eh ! " and so on.

Now it is certainly strange that if a man had the power of seeing the word through its covers, he should need such aid, or that such aid could be of any use to him.

How can the knowledge of the *number* of letters in a word, or of the two or three first or last letters in a word, help a man to see the remainder ? Of course, however, it may help him to *guess* them.

When he took the folded papers in his hands, in his various manipulations—placing them to his stomach, &c.—he was frequently seen to unfold the edge slightly, just as if he *wished* to unfold the paper completely ; and I observed also that he frequently shaded his face with his hand (*as if meditating*) in such wise *as would have enabled him to unfold such papers unperceived by persons at a small distance from him*, although my close watching rendered this impossible in the present case. I regard this as important, as it indicates how deceit may have been practised in other cases, and how apparent success may have been achieved.

It was also evident, throughout the exhibition, that Alexis had several *friends* (I do not call them *confederates*—but they afforded, in their conduct, the strongest grounds for suspicion that they were such,) who took an active part in trying to help him in his difficulties. Among other manœuvres, repeated attempts were made to get the spectators (and myself especially) removed from the table, under the plea that ladies could not see, &c. A French woman—evidently one of the party—wished me to give one of my boxes to *her*, begging me at the same time to leave the room, as my presence as an unbeliever was hostile to the powers of Alexis, and that *then* she would get him to read the word it contained. Of course, had I complied, there was nothing to prevent

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her from opening the box and naming the word to the performer. These, and other things of the same complexion, are not merely suspicious, but show that, whatever the results might be, they could not be established on, or derived from, pure unquestionable evidence.

From the whole of the exhibition the following conclusions must be admitted:—

1. That the whole affair bore the complexion of trickery, or, at all events, that it wanted entirely the precision requisite in scientific inquiries.

2. That the total amount of positive failures and positive blunders greatly exceeds that of performances having even a colour or slight degree of success.

3. That the failures occurred in cases where the circumstances were such as to exclude collusion and the exercise of ordinary vision.

4. That all the instances of success occurred where circumstances allowed of collusion or ordinary vision.

5. That in all of the cases of success, such collusion or vision was either proved or rendered extremely probable.

6. That there was not one single unequivocal example of what is called *clairvoyance*.

7. That, consequently, this exhibition not only affords not one tittle of evidence in favour of the existence of this faculty in the man Alexis, but presents extremely strong grounds for believing that the pretended power in him is feigned, and that he is consequently an impostor.

From what I witnessed at this exhibition, and at an-

other where it was pretended that the so-called somnambulist exhibited the faculty of having the phrenological organs excited individually by mesmerism, I am much more satisfied than I used to be in regard to the probable causes of the extensive belief in the wonders of mesmerism. On both these occasions it was clear that many of the spectators were either totally unacquainted with the laws of evidence, or that their enthusiastic temperament, or previous convictions or prejudices, rendered them, for the time, incapable of appreciating, or of being guided by, such laws. They admitted as positive facts what appeared to calm, unprejudiced observers, not only not facts, but the merest assumptions, unsupported by a tittle of the kind of evidence required in scientific investigations. It was also evident that there was among such persons an endeavour to *help* the exhibitor to get at the results proposed, and an eagerness to believe everything without question, and with a proneness of faith unjustifiable and therefore never admitted in inquiries of a scientific character. A further source of fallacy existed in the circumstances in which the great majority of the spectators were placed, viz., the utter impossibility, owing to their distance from the scene of action, of their seeing *exactly* what took place, so as to enable them to guard against the possibility of mistakes, misstatements, or collusion. These circumstances, taken in combination with the natural tendency of the human mind to believe rather than to be sceptical, and with the proneness of mankind in general to recollect successful wonders (especially in the way of guessing, divining, or prophesying) rather than

failures, may, as I have said, help to explain the widespread belief in mesmerism, even if mesmerism should be false.

In concluding these hurried notes, I think it right to state that even now I only avow myself a sceptic or doubter—not an utter disbeliever—as to mesmerism. I am still open to conviction, when such evidence of its truth is afforded me as is deemed necessary in any other scientific inquiries. The things I have myself seen, most assuredly increase very materially the doubts I before entertained; still I do not regard them as sufficient to prove the utter falseness of mesmerism; they prove nothing more than their utter insufficiency to prove its truth. Even the positive proof of trickery and collusion on the part of its professors, however, would afford no sound reason for declaring it to be false. Like medicine, or any other branch of natural science, it may be true, although it be professed and practised by charlatans, cheats, and rogues. Give me the same kind of proofs of *clairvoyance* that I have of other scientific truths, and I will believe it.

## SECOND EXHIBITION.

This was what was called a *private sitting*, being held (July 19th) at the house of the physician who now reports it, (Dr. Forbes,) and who reported the former. On this occasion, M. Marcillet, of course, received his usual fee of five guineas for the performance. The company consisted in all of not less than twenty. All present were medical gentlemen, except *five*, two of the five being of the respective ages of fifteen and sixteen.\*

It being well known that the mesmerisers are in the habit of attributing failures, when they occur, to the uncourteous or hostile interference of the disbelievers, it was predetermined that on the present occasion MM. Marcillet and Alexis should not only have every courtesy shown them, but should not be interfered with in any way, except in so far as was absolutely necessary to ensure anything like accuracy in observing the proceedings. And this determination was rigidly acted on throughout; M. Marcillet being given distinctly to understand that he was to follow his own plans, the company being simply spectators, unless called on by M. Marcillet himself to

\* It is a minute and not very important circumstance, yet one worth mentioning, as showing as well on what small matters these exhibitors glorify themselves, as how their asseverations require being checked by calmer observation, that on this occasion M. Marcillet boasted not a little of the wonderful perspicacity of Alexis, in finding out, and telling him (M. Marcillet,) that all the party were medical men (*médecins*) except *two*.

assist him or his ward. One of the company agreed to take notes of the proceedings in short-hand. This gentleman placed himself in a corner of the room at some distance from Alexis, in order that he might not attract the attention of the latter. I thought he remained unnoticed, but it was afterwards found that he was noticed by M. Marcillet, and his presence was urged as a grievance by M. Marcillet, *but not until after the occurrence of many failures*. It is most certain that the process of note-taking was conducted with the greatest calmness and reserve, so as to be unnoticed by almost every one in the room. This precaution was purposely taken in order to avoid giving offence to M. Marcillet, or interfering in any way with the proceedings of Alexis. It was arranged that, during certain of the experiments, the minutiae of which the short-hand writer could not distinctly see, another of the company should quietly communicate the facts to him.

About nine o'clock M. Marcillet proceeded to magnetise Alexis by sitting down before him, and steadfastly staring at his countenance. In the course of five minutes, or less, Alexis began to yawn and stretch, and immediately afterwards appeared to fall asleep. After a few further manœuvres M. Marcillet considered him in a proper condition for action. He had previously prepared the apparatus for bandaging the eyes, but when this operation was going to be set about, Alexis declared his intention not to be bandaged. This was, of course, immediately complied with, without any reason being asked or given.



## I.

On Alexis proposing to play cards, a new pack was laid on the table, and a gentleman of the company selected to play with him, as being known to Alexis, and considered by him and M. Marcillet as favorable at least to mesmerism, if not a full believer in it. The game was to be *écarté*.

a. Alexis took the pack, threw out the superfluous cards, and the game proceeded in the usual manner—the cards being dealt in the usual manner, sometimes by Alexis, and played with their faces upwards.

b. After a hand or two thus played, Alexis proposed to continue the game with a partition, or screen, placed between him and his partner. The screen used was a music-book (eleven inches high by fourteen wide) supported at the back by a small round sofa-cushion. Several hands were thus played, Alexis playing his cards down on his own side of the partition, or handing them over it, or round the end of it, and his partner laying his cards down on his side of the partition. Although the screen was too low to prevent all *possibility* of vision, except when the cards of his adversary were kept very close to the cushion (which was on the adversary's side,) and although they were not always kept thus close, still, as it cannot be proved that Alexis did see any of his opponent's cards, little or no stress is laid on this circumstance; the fact is merely mentioned historically, and as a hint for future experimenters.

The following is the account of this part of the per-



formance from the notes of the gentleman who took them at the time :

“ *First game.* Alexis made a mistake in commencing the first hand, by desiring his opponent to play a *spade*, and he stated that his opponent had *four trumps* in his hand when he had *not one*. In the second hand, Alexis said that his opponent had *the ten*, which he had not ; but he stated also that he had *two trumps*, which was correct; and also that he had *the seven*, which again was correct. In the third hand he was again mistaken in regard to the *trump card*, which he said was a *diamond*, when it was a *spade*; but although he was wrong in regard to the trumps, the cards afterwards fell as he had previously said they would fall. In the next hand he said the trump turned up was a *heart*, when it was a *spade*. He then asked for *five* cards, when he only required *three*. In the next hand Alexis was correct in his statements *four times*, but was *wrong in three*.

“ *Second game.* In commencing the next game, Alexis was mistaken in the *trump*, and also in the *number* of cards wanted; and, on the whole hand, he was *twice correct* and *twice in error*. In the second hand the cards were played with *their faces downwards*, when Alexis was again *mistaken in the trump*. In the third hand he was mistaken in the *number of cards wanted*, and he stated he had played a *red card* when he had played a *black one*. He now threw up his hand on the supposition that his opponent had the best cards, when, in fact, he himself

had the means of winning the game, having the odd trick in his own hand."

Giving my own general impression of the results of the card-playing and card-seeing, I should say that there was very partial success, and a vast number of failures. The somnambulist sometimes played tolerably well; sometimes he named the number of cards wanted accurately; sometimes he was right as to trumps; but in all these respects he was much oftener wrong than right. In giving the names of cards placed behind the screen, he over and over again not only mistook clubs for spades, and hearts for diamonds, but he mistook the cards of different colours, and even the court and plain cards of different colours, one for another. He sometimes fancied his opponent had a very good hand when he had a bad one, and *vice versa*. He sometimes followed suit, and sometimes he did not. In a word, his performance seemed decidedly better than might have been expected of a blind man, yet far short of what we had a right to expect from one who professes to see through opaque bodies. Indeed, his guesses as to the cards turned up behind the screen were hardly more prosperous than mere random guesses might be expected to be, when we consider that there was only three to one against any one naming the right colour, and not a very vast odds (I do not know how many) against naming the right card, as all the small cards up to the sevens inclusive are thrown out of the pack.

## II.

Upon throwing up his cards, Alexis remained for some time in his chair, with M. Marcillet seated by his side, encouraging and condoling with him, while the company were seated or standing round the room, conversing quietly together, not at all interfering with the proceedings of the performers, and carefully keeping their opinions as to the past proceeding from the ears of MM. Marcillet and Alexis. After a considerable time we were informed that Alexis was prepared to exercise his faculty of *clairvoyance* by reading certain words, or sentences, *through* the pages of a book, or through several folds of clean paper, placed on an opened page. The latter being proposed by M. Marcillet himself, three sheets of writing-paper were placed open (that is, three leaves) across the two pages of a small book, opened about the middle. The book was opened at random by myself, and the paper placed on the pages, without their being seen by Alexis or myself. The book was a small duodecimo, in French (Dr. De Carro's *Almanach de Carlsbad*), which I feel assured was not seen previously in the house by Alexis.\*

a. After poring for a considerable time over the white paper spread on the book, with his hand pressing it in different parts, and his face pretty closely approximated to it, like a short-sighted person, he fixed on a point

\* Even this, however, was *possible*, as this book was lying on a table, in the back drawing-room, in which Alexis remained a short time by himself, previously to being magnetised.

about the centre of the right-hand page, and spoke the words "*de France*," indicating the spot beneath which these words, he said, lay. I was particular in making him indicate *the exact spot*, and I also made him say whether or not the words (which he also wrote on the paper) were on the page *immediately* below the superimposed writing-paper. He said *they were on this page*; and that both he and M. Marcillet expected to find them there appeared evident to me, from the obvious concern expressed by them when the paper was removed. The page (p. 77 of the book) immediately beneath the sheets of paper, was two thirds *blank*, there being only seven lines of print at the top of it; and on the exact spot which Alexis fixed on, there was a small black line, or mark, such as printers are accustomed to place at the end of a chapter,—which this was.

Although I regarded this as a complete failure, and it seemed at first to be so considered by MM. Marcillet and Alexis, they immediately shifted their ground, and said it sufficed if the words were found *anywhere* opposite to the indicated spot. They were, according to our plan, humoured in this, and search was made for the words in question. After turning over some leaves, and the exact words not being found, the performers at length seized on the word "*souffrance*," which was found on the leaf next to the blank one (p. 79), in the third line below the level of the spot fixed on by Alexis, and about half an inch to one side of it.

I cannot say how many pages were turned over in searching for the *clear-seen* words, but we certainly did

turn over several, both at this time and on the occasion of the next experiment; and it is to be remembered, that while Alexis and myself were doing so (or rather while he was doing so, and I was trying what I could, without giving offence, to prevent him), M. Marcillet was standing over us and, without restriction, eagerly examining the pages also. These facts, of course, utterly vitiate the succeeding experiments on the same book, as there was *a possibility*, at least, of MM. Marcillet and Alexis seeing words in other pages; and it will hardly be denied that there was an *extreme probability* that they did so. However, on the principle of letting the experimenters have their own way, under our close observation, we proceeded to further trials on the same book.

b. The paper was again placed by me on the book opened at random. It happened to be at page 98. On this occasion Alexis did not fix on words, but selected a point at the upper left-hand corner of the page, and said the page began with an *alinea* (a new paragraph, where the print was *set in* to the extent of a couple of letters). He distinctly said the page *began* with this *alinea*, and I marked the spot on and through the paper by strong pressure with my nail. On removing the sheet of paper it was found that the page did *not* begin with an *alinea*, and that the spot indicated by Alexis was altogether above the commencement of the print. There was, however, an *alinea*, or new paragraph, commencing with the *third line* of the page, and this was immediately seized on by MM. Marcillet and Alexis, as the thing seen and indicated. It was denied by MM. Marcillet and Alexis that

Alexis had said the *alinea* began the page, and the existing *alinea* was considered by them as sufficiently near the spot marked to make the experiment successful! It is to be remarked that the pages of this book only contained twenty-two lines, and the paragraphs were very numerous throughout. In the very page in question there were two other paragraphs. Of course it was perfectly easy for Alexis to observe, during the search for the words in the former experiment, this disposition of the print.

c. The paper was once more placed further on (p. 133), and after a short time Alexis announced that he saw a certain word, which he was requested to write down exactly over the spot where it was to be found. He did so writing the word (which, like the words “*de France*,” still remains on the paper) “*Milburn*,” with a diæresis over the *u*.

On this occasion I do not think it was stated by Alexis that the word was certainly to be found on the page immediately below the paper, and consequently we allowed him to turn over the pages and look for it. After some time, neither he nor I being able to find the word, and it being regarded by me as of no real moment, even if it was found (the experiment being vitiated by the previous leaf-turning), I shut the book, wishing that we should proceed to some other experiment.\* Seeing that there was disappointment and some dissatisfaction expressed by M. Marcillet at my conduct, I said, “I have no doubt the

\* I mention this particularly, because, at a subsequent part of the evening, M. Marcillet chose to be extremely wroth on account of this action of shutting the book before the word was found.

word is in the book," thinking this almost certain, as the book was on the Waters of Carlsbad. Accordingly, I gave the book up into their own hands, and after a considerable search not this word exactly, but one very like it, and one which, under ordinary circumstances, would be admitted to be the same, only misspelt—was found—viz., "*Mühlbrunn*," in page 165; that is, thirty-pages beyond the page on which the sheets of paper were placed! The word was *near* the spot indicated as its site by M. Alexis, but not this spot exactly; it was in the second line above and a little to the right of it. The words on this page, immediately opposite the spot selected by M. Alexis, were "*à-dire de*," and it is to be recollected that there was a series of, at least, *sixty-four* words, superimposed on each other, between the surface to which vision was directed and this page. It is certainly curious that some one of these sixty-four words was not selected in preference.

Thus ended the trials with books. A period of repose succeeded, during which MM. Marcillet and Alexis seemed to be mutually comforting and consoling each other, under what, even by their own showing, was by no means triumphant success. Meanwhile I prepared what I regarded as the only real experiment, the *experimentum crucis*, viz., the reading or divining of words inclosed in opaque covers, respecting which there could be no collusion and no delusion.



## III.

I laid on the table five packets, informing MM. Marcillet and Alexis that each contained a French word. Four of these words were in largish print, and one written in good-sized letters. Three of the envelopes consisted of several folds from two to six—of fine writing-paper, one being gummed and sealed, the others merely carefully folded so that they could not be unfolded without this being observed. No one but myself was aware of the contents of these packets, and each was marked exteriorly with a cipher corresponding with a card in my pocket-book, indicating the word contained in each. Alexis selected one of the unsealed and thinnest envelopes, and set himself, with great apparent earnestness, and without any seeming discontent or distrust, to divine its contents. It contained the word "*Fin*," written in a large bold hand, on a piece of card. As inclosed in the envelope, the card was covered by only two thicknesses of paper (a fine wove post). Profound silence was preserved in the room, and no one was close to Alexis's chair but M. Marcillet and myself. His proceedings were—*to look intently at the paper for a considerable time in different aspects*, pressing it and turning it about in his hands, pressing it occasionally to his breast, forehead, and lips; but still seeming to depend mainly on *his eyes*



for the accomplishment of the difficult feat. After a considerable time he said the word contained in the envelope was *printed*. No assent or dissent being expressed, after another examination he said it was *written*, and that he was wrong in saying it was printed. After another long pause, he said the word consisted of *three letters*. Still silence and expectation; and after a short time he declared *he could see nothing*, and threw down the paper.

Here the "*sitting*" ended, as far as Alexis was concerned, although he remained a long time in his so-called somnambulist state, M. Marcillet soothing and comforting him, and a medical gentleman—a believer in Alexis—doing the same, and also attempting to excite the phrenological organs that might lead to a more cheerful, confident, and hopeful spirit—but in vain; Alexis refused to attempt anything more that evening.

Although the same uniform calm, cautious, and courteous behaviour towards MM. Marcillet and Alexis was still preserved by the company, M. Marcillet several times started up in great excitement, denouncing our proceedings, proclaiming the powers of his *protégé*, &c. The general impression produced by his conduct was, that he was desirous of provoking some retaliation, so that he might have to allege some stronger ground than he possessed for the failure of Alexis. If this was his object, it was entirely baulked by the calm behaviour of all present.

The conclusions drawn from the results of the previous exhibition seem equally deducible from those now detailed. Alexis utterly failed, now as then, to show, unequivocally,

that power which has been called *clairvoyance*. In several cases, both on the present and former occasions, his guesses (if such they were), even when not correct, came curiously near the truth,—as, for instance, when he named the exact number of letters in the word in the envelope.\* The failures and blunders, however, were so egregious, and so unaccountable, on the hypothesis of the existence of a *thorough-seeing* faculty, that they must stagger the most credulous when fairly examined. Still, as was observed on the former occasion, the results being only *negative*, prove nothing more than that nothing was proved. It only remains for the mesmerists to adduce one or two *positive* unequivocal proofs, to put aside all our negative ones. Such proof, however, is, I believe, yet to be exhibited; and until it is exhibited unequivocally,—that is, with similar guards and precautions as the failures now recorded took place under,—I, for one, must still remain a doubter at the very least.

Many important remarks on the strange conduct of the mesmerisers, as professors of what ought to be a matter of science, are suggested by the preceding narratives, and by the proceedings generally. I will here only briefly re-

\* I have *now* (1845,) not the slightest doubt, after the occurrence of circumstances which will be detailed in a subsequent page, (See in *SECOND SERIES*, p. 53, the divination of the word "*Toulon*" by Adolphe,) that Alexis *did see*, by ordinary vision, through the folds of paper, the three letters in the word *vin*, although he was unable to name them positively. I am now surprised that he failed to name this word or some of the others in my papers. I was not then fully aware of the insufficiency of a few folds of white paper to exclude ordinary vision in certain lights.

fer to one point—their *inconsistency* with one another, and with themselves at different times. At the first exhibition, it was declared essential to the reading of the word in the box, that the person giving the box should *know* the word. At the second, this was said by M. Marcillet to be unnecessary. And, indeed, the very practice of Alexis himself, at the first exhibition, proved that he considered this knowledge on the part of the propounder to be unnecessary; the *reading of words in the book* through a number of pages being, in fact, the very same thing as reading them through an envelope. The alleged necessity, however, of having the word known by the propounder, obviously supplied one additional means of knowing it through channels common to all; while the manœuvre of reading the book furnished the most facile and ready help to successful imposition. Again, it is maintained by some professors that the somnambulist while wide awake, as far as hearing is concerned, to the mesmeriser, is totally deaf and blind to impressions coming from others—unless *demesmerised in any particular sense* for the nonce. There was nothing of this sort in Alexis; he did not hesitate to confer with and understand everybody who chose to address him *in relation (en rapport)* or *out of relation*, believer or infidel.

It has been thought necessary, on this and the former occasion, to be very minute and circumstantial in detailing the experiments, as it is only in this manner that a just judgment can be formed by any reader, of the positive

value of such experiments. Almost all the published records of mesmeric wonders, and all those I ever heard narrated, are utterly valueless, from being defective in exact and minute details. If the proceedings of Alexis and a few more of the so-called CLEAR-SEERS, were followed up for a certain time, in the close manner adopted on these two occasions, we should speedily come to positive conclusions respecting the truth or falsehood of these most wonderful wonders.

## Second Series.

### ADOLPHE, &c.

HAVING heard much of the feats of Adolphe, which were said by some to outdo even those of his brother Alexis, and having learnt that Dr. Elliotson considered him a genuine somnambulist, I was once more induced to renew my search for clairvoyance, notwithstanding the inauspicious results of my former attempts. In setting about this second trial, as in my previous examinations, I determined to give the mesmerists no just grounds of complaint against me, while I took the ordinary precautions against being imposed on by imperfect or false evidence. I resolved to interfere in no way with the course of their proceedings, contenting myself with being a simple observer of what was passing, or, at any rate, no further an actor in the scene than was in accordance with the wishes, or, at least, with the full sanction of the directing mesmeriser. And it is but justice to Mr. Vernon to state, that while expressing his full satisfaction with the course I and my friends took at these sittings, he interposed no obstructions in the way of our proceedings,

and afforded us no grounds for believing that there existed any unfair collusion between him and the subjects of his mesmeric manipulations. He certainly seemed desirous that we should ascertain the truth; although, if he still believes in the good faith of his Lady-performer, after what he witnessed along with me, he must be much more credulous than becomes a philosophical inquirer.

In laying the results of these new trials before the reader, I shall, in the first place give a simple narrative of the whole proceedings, without comment; I shall then append such special remarks as are called for by the cases, and conclude with such inferences as seem to flow naturally from the premises.

In all the examinations, except those of Fräulein von Gömmern, I was most kindly assisted by my friends. Mr. Drewry Ottley was present at every meeting; Professor Sharpey at every meeting but one; Professor Reid, Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Risdon Bennett, Dr. Wigan, Mr. Noble, Mr. Newport, Mr. Spenser Wells, were each present at one sitting.

### I. *Adolphe.*

TRIAL A (ADOLPHE).—*At Mr. Vernon's, Duke Street,*

May 13, 1845.

About a dozen persons were assembled. Previously to Adolphe's appearance, a poor woman, said to be labouring under cancer, was mesmerised, and speedily fell into apparent sleep. She was left in this state during the rest of the sitting.

Then a young girl was introduced, mesmerised, and put through the popular performances of traction, and exhibiting the excitement of the phrenological organs (phreno-mesmerism). This performance was so marvelously perfect, so monstrously demonstrative of the truth of the two sciences (phrenology and mesmerism), that it was impossible to entertain a moment's doubt that the whole thing was a piece of sheer imposture, unworthy of detail.

Adolphe was then introduced, mesmerised and bandaged (apparently with care) by Mr. Ottley, and then set to play *écarté*. This he did wonderfully well for a man who did not see—rather badly for a man who did. He also, while bandaged, told the names of cards on having them presented to him—sometimes wrong, often right: and on visiting cards, he sometimes read the printed names partly or wholly.

After a little time, the bandages were removed, and Adolphe proposed to *clear-see* in the undoubted sense, i. e. by seeing through opaque bodies. Several sealed packets were placed by me into his hands; but, after a time, he announced that he had not the power of vision, and did not declare the contents of any. A gentleman (who had played at *écarté* with him) then placed a folded paper (not many times folded, and not sealed) in his hands. This he twisted about, looked earnestly at, placed to his chest mouth, &c., and then, though still declaring he could not see, began to announce, by fits and starts, and with great seeming carelessness, some of the letters of the word inclosed. He first said the word contained two L's (*ll*),

then the letters "shall," then "marshall, or something like it." I watched the paper while in his hands, and saw that he did not unfold it. The paper was then opened, and was found to have written on it the word "*Maschalla*."

TRIAL B (ADOLPHE).—*At Dr. Forbes's,*

May 16, 1845.

On this occasion there were twelve or fifteen persons present. Adolphe was thrown into the mesmeric sleep (so called) in a minute or two by the fixed gaze of Mr. Vernon. Soon after, his eyes were closely bandaged with pads of cotton wool and three silk handkerchiefs, by Mr. Ottley, and apparently very effectually. Some playing-cards were then put into his hands, given to Mr. Vernon by myself. Adolphe twisted them about, and felt them rapidly with his fingers—still keeping them within the sphere of ordinary vision. Some of the cards he named accurately, some inaccurately, but still approximating the truth: others he entirely mistook. He was then (still bandaged) set to play écarté. He played much more accurately than it seemed possible for a blind man to play—making, however, frequent gross mistakes. He, as well as Mr. Vernon, was evidently dissatisfied with his performance, and he was therefore *demesmerised*, and taken for a short time into the other room (divided by folding doors, open), and again mesmerised there. He was then brought back into the room where the company was, and once



more bandaged. The same performances were gone through, and with more decided success, the mistakes being fewer, and the hits stronger. After a short hand at écarté, Mr. Vernon proposed that he (still bandaged,) should read a book and the *Lancet* journal, which happened to be on a table near, was placed before him, with the title-page uppermost. He placed his hands rapidly over the large title, and looked at it earnestly in the attitude of one reading, and then spelt the words accurately, "The *Lancet*." He turned over a few pages rapidly until he came to the leading article of the journal, and again read the large title, "The *Lancet*."

Adolphe having thus succeeded in playing tolerably well, and having been (purposely) lauded by those who stood near for his complete success in reading the two words mentioned ("The *Lancet*"), Mr. V. then thought him in a fair state for exhibiting his powers of positive clairvoyance, and accordingly some dozen articles were placed before him, all carefully prepared, and all thoroughly enclosing printed words (French), so that it was *impossible* for ordinary vision to reach these. They consisted of small wooden boxes, common blank envelopes (one within another, like nests of boxes), and papers folded on themselves, so as to present some half dozen thicknesses of paper over the words, all sealed or gummed. Adolphe took up some of these, and handled and twisted them about, placing them to his breast and mouth, but almost immediately declared that he could not see; and notwithstanding the great apparent (assumed) sympathy, and positive kindness and encouragement he received from all

around him, he did not even proceed so far as to make a guess. Mr. Vernon, while admitting the failure, admitted also that Adolphe had had perfectly fair play, and that he had no obvious means of accounting for his failure.

TRIAL C (ADOLPHE).—*At Mr. Otteley's,*

May 19, 1845.

Several of the same party that had met at Dr. Forbes's again assembled, but fewer, there not being more than six or eight present at any time. After the same proceeding as on the former occasions, viz. a fixed stare for a moment or so, Adolphe, showing first a seeming drowsy mid-nodding state, suddenly let his head fall back rather forcibly on the top of the back of the arm-chair in which he was seated. He was bandaged by Mr. Otteley, assisted by Dr. Sharpey, and greater care was taken in doing so (according to previous arrangement), especially by bringing the cotton on to the nose, and low down by the side of the nose. The three bandages were also very carefully applied, so that we had all strong grounds for believing that it was hardly possible for Adolphe to see in the natural manner. Cards were then taken to him by Mr. Vernon, and afterwards by others, but he declared he could see nothing; and, notwithstanding all the coaxing, &c., after many attempts he still could see nothing. After a time he was demesmerised, and having

been allowed to rest some time, he was rebandaged exactly as before, and with the same result precisely, i. e. with total incapacity to see anything brought to him. After the bandages were removed, we wished him to see *with his eyes* what was in the room, but he kept his lids partially closed, and declared he could see nothing. With Mr. Vernon's consent, I opened the lid of one eye with my fingers, but still he declared he could see nothing.

He was again demesmerised, and it was then concerted among us that he should be purposely bandaged badly, in order to shew us if he should then have better clairvoyance. But any further proceedings were objected to by Mr. Vernon, and were not urged by us.

TRIAL D (ADOLPHE).—*At Mr. Vernon's,*

May 24, 1845.

At the meeting at Mr. Ottley's, on the 19th, on the failure of Adolphe it was proposed by Mr. Vernon that we should meet at his house on Saturday, the 24th, at half-past two, and we were invited to bring with us the sealed packets which were taken to Mr. Ottley's, but not used.

On repairing to Duke street at the time appointed, we found the room almost filled with persons to witness the performance, and that in place of being a private sitting, as we expected, it was a public one. However we took our places near the seat of operation, with Mr. Vernon's sanction.

Adolphe was now introduced, and was speedily stared into the so-called sleep. A gentleman present (Dr. Wigan) came forward, and bandaged his eyes badly—so, at least, Dr. Sharpey, Dr. Reid, and myself thought—and I immediately stated our opinion to Dr. W., warning him that we would not allow any results to be genuine or valid derived from the bandaging. Dr. W. however, considered the bandaging to be at first effectual, but soon changed his mind on witnessing, as he affirmed, decided efforts made by Adolphe (both by throwing the muscles of the face into action, and by touching the bandages repeatedly with his hands) to change the original adjustment of the bandages.

However, so bandaged, and after the manœuvres witnessed by Dr. Wigan, he proceeded to play at his usual game of *écarté* with a gentleman said to be a good and powerful mesmeriser (Mr. Thomson, I understood). A few hands were played, and, I believe, tolerably well, but the cards were all thrown in the usual manner, with their faces upwards, and within the sphere of ordinary vision.

The bandages were then removed, and Mr. Vernon requested the boxes, sealed envelopes, &c. to be produced, and several of them were placed in the hands of Adolphe. He passed them repeatedly, one after another, through his hands, pressed them to his mouth, &c. but rejected them all, one after another, declaring that he could not see their contents. He, however, speedily gave the preference to a folded (but not thickly folded, and not sealed or gummed) paper, prepared on the spot by Dr. Wigan.

This he kept long in his hands, as if gazing intently on

it, then pressed to his mouth, nose, &c., and once or twice very slightly unfolded it, but not sufficiently to expose the contents. After a long and painful trial he gave up the attempt, notwithstanding Dr. Wigan encouraged him by telling him the written words were common French words used every day by himself. The failure was admitted to be complete.

## II.—*Mr. Vernon's Lady-Somnambulist.*

On several occasions Mr. Vernon had told me of the extraordinary and great powers of this person, both as to feats of simple clairvoyance, and as to her capacity of diagnosticating diseases. He named it as a peculiarity of her clairvoyance, that she could better read the words that were enelosed in opaque boxes than those which were folded within paper envelopes. He spoke of her ability to do this as a common and notorious fact that could not in any way be gainsayed; and although he expressed himself as never being *certain* that she would "see" on any given occasion, he spoke of her doing so at our purposed trial with the utmost confidence, and evidently looked forward to her performances as being likely to make up for the failures of Adolphe.

Of her capacity to discover diseases he spoke more enthusiastically still, and over and over again expressed an anxious desire that I should bring a patient to her on whom she might prove her diagnosticating powers.

This person, whose name I do not know, is apparently

between 20 and 30 ; she is pallid, with good features, a widow, and reports herself to have been cured of a severe local disease by mesmerism.

TRIAL E (THE LADY).—*At Mr. Vernon's,*

May 24, 1845.

In order to meet the alleged peculiarity of this person's power of clairvoyance, I came prepared with closed boxes. She was speedily thrown into the so-called mesmeric sleep, in which she lay while Mr. Vernon, standing by her side, explained aloud to the company the peculiarities of her mesmeric manifestations as to rigidity, coma, &c. All these she speedily exhibited, especially a fine theatrical "*extase*" in the mode of an adoring Madonna, in which Mr. Vernon compared her to Lord Shrewsbury's *Estatical*. After these various exhibitions had lasted a considerable time, she was asked by Mr. Vernon if she would try to read in the boxes. On her assenting, they were presented to her, viz., two small deal boxes, about three inches in length and half an inch deep, each containing a single printed word in large letters. The boxes were of thin materials, but closely fitted and sealed. A third box (if it may be so called,) consisted of an old red morocco spectacle-case, with the flap closed and sealed. This contained the following words in print, large and distinct, and placed lengthwise in the case, "*Consultation médico-légale sur quelques signes.*" After examining them, she

rejected the two wooden boxes, and took possession of the spectacle case. This she pressed to her forehead, on the top of her head, &c., with apparent deep consideration and thoughtfulness. After a time, she summoned the person (myself) who had placed the words in the box, and who knew them, to her side. I went to her, and her hand and mine were grasped in the mesmeriser's hand, while she continued to press the case on her forehead, and to make (as it seemed) strenuous efforts to pierce the mystery within. At length she began to guess at letters, and to question me in that style vulgarly called "pump-ing." The *word*, she said, had five letters, had it not? I said there *were* five letters *in the box, and more*. After a time she said the word contained *seven* letters; then she made many assertions as to individual letters and their sequences. These guesses were taken down by Dr. Reid, and were as follows:—

1. Five letters.
2. Seven letters altogether.
3. *The word* ends with an *e*.
4. There is an *s* in the word.
5. There is a *c* next to the *e*.
6. Two *c*'s (*c c*) one at the end, one near the beginning.
7. An *i*.
8. Thinks the word is "*science*"—at least it looks like "*science*."
9. She sees clearly *e, c, s, c*; is not quite sure of the *n*, but sees two upright strokes.

All this took up a long time, probably nearly an hour.



The case was then opened, and the words produced. Before this was done, however, she had said repeatedly that if she failed now she would (in her mesmeric state) announce a day on which she would be able to read *with certainty*; and at last she announced the day to be the 21st of June. She prescribed the nature of the box that was to be seen through, viz., a dark-coloured leather-covered case, such as is used to contain jewellery and small portraits; and wished *one* word to be inclosed, not too long, and that only a few friends should attend the sitting along with myself.

TRIAL F (THE LADY).—*At Mr. Vernon's,*

June 21st.

According to the appointment prophetically fixed at the last sitting, I attended at the house No. 36, Manchester-street, accompanied by a few friends, viz. Drs. Sharpey and Risdon Bennett, Messrs. Ottley and Wells. After some delay, the lady was thrown into the usual state, and, having gone through the various phases pre-announced by Mr. Vernon, such as coma, rigidity, extasy, &c., she proposed to read the contents of the boxes. Previously to her doing so, however, Mr. Vernon let us know, incidentally as it were, that success was not so certain on account of some conditions as to previous mesmerising of the lady by himself on a certain day not having been strictly fulfilled. But he did not seem to rest much on this cir-



cumstance, and the lady proceeded to her task. She requested the box to be given her which contained the shortest word. This was accordingly done by myself, who alone knew the contents of any of the boxes on the table. The box given was one from which a small portrait had been removed; it was four inches square, and contained the single word "NO," printed on white paper in very bold letters, each an inch in length. After much grasping and shuffling about the box, and pressing it long on the forehead, she announced that the word was one of six letters; and then, after long intervals, and in the usual guessing, inquiring—"pumping"—style, announced the letters first seen to be—first *e*, then *a*, then *s*. She was told upon repeatedly expressing a desire to know the truth, that there was not an *e* in the word; and, after a considerable period, having been told that her other guesses were not more fortunate, she resigned the task as far as regarded that box.

It was proposed that she should attempt another box, (there were five in all on the table,) and after being taken out of the room in the so-called sleep-waking state for some time, and brought back again and freshly mesmerised, she attempted another box of the same kind, 3 inches by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in size. This box contained the word "*Society*," printed in good large capitals on white paper. After the usual manipulations, and long pressure of the box on the forehead, and having had, at her request, my hand placed along with her own in the mesmerist's hands, she at last "saw" the following letters, announcing them in the following order, but not asserting that this was

their order in the box—*e, r, s, a*. The boxes were then unsealed and opened in the presence of the persons assembled, and the real letters and words exhibited.

TRIAL G (THE LADY).—*June 21, at Mr. Vernon's (same evening as the Trial F.)*

Mr. Vernon having repeatedly expressed his wishes that I should bring a *patient* to this lady, to test her diagnostic powers, which he spoke of as almost infallible, I took with me on this occasion a young man known to me for years, and with the state of whose health I was well acquainted. He was, in fact, in very good health, except that he had long laboured under enormously large varicose veins of the legs. These were so large that it would be very easy to detect them by pressure through the clothes, and, therefore, to guard against this, he was requested to wear trousers and long boots. The somnambulist proceeded to feel the patient's body all over, passing slightly over the lower extremities, and resting chiefly on the chest and abdomen. After a considerable time so occupied, she announced a variety of affections and symptoms as constituting his malady, such as a weakness of stomach, palpitation, breathlessness, great irritation of nerves, &c. &c. Fearing that it might be afterwards alleged that the varicose condition of the veins was not a disease, I requested her to direct attention to the *surface* of the body, telling her distinctly, without letting her know that he had no internal disease,

that he had a local disease on the *surface* of his body. She, however, made no announcement of the actual affection, or of any other disease of the surface. Upon being asked by the mesmeriser what would cure the diseases she had declared the patient to be suffering from, she replied that he (Mr. Vernon) knew what would do him good—viz., *mesmerism*. The young man, on being afterwards questioned by Mr. Vernon as to his health, declared that he had not had a headache, or been in any way unwell, for years, except from his swelled legs.

### III. *Fräulein Von Gönnern.*

In the spring of the present year (1845) advertisements appeared in the public prints, announcing the arrival of this lady in London, and her intention to examine and prescribe (mesmerically) for patients either at her own or at the patients' houses; the fee to be paid being, in the former case, three guineas, and in the latter six. In the same advertisement some wonderful cures were announced as performed by her, such as the cure of blindness, insanity, &c. Her brother, with whom she travelled, and who is her mesmeriser, called on me, and expressed a strong desire that I should visit his sister, and witness her powers, which he described as infallible, both in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. On being assured that the sitting should be private, I waited on Miss Von Gönnern at her lodgings. I found her to be an agreeable young damsel of some twenty or twenty-five years of age. No one was

present but her brother. He informed me that his sister was possessed of the ordinary power of common clairvoyance, and had formerly exhibited some wonderful feats in this line; but that, now, she preferred exercising her powers in a more useful manner, namely, in ascertaining and curing diseases. He, however, offered to mesmerise her, and said that we must then be content with whatever she chose to do, whether in the way of simple clairvoyance, or otherwise.

#### TRIAL H.—(MISS VON G.)

Mr. Von Gönnern, in proceeding to mesmerise his sister, placed her in the recumbent posture on a sofa. A few passes threw her into the so-called mesmeric sleep. After a short time, while still in the recumbent posture, she began gesticulating with her arms, and pointing with her fingers in a very remarkable manner; she then raised herself from the sofa, and proceeded to execute a series of most complex and elaborate, and, at the same time, very graceful and imposing gesticulations, with her arms often stretched out at full length, and then gracefully retracted, with the fingers expanded, and slowly brought into contact with different parts of her own body, as if mesmerising herself. After a time, she included my body in the sphere of her manipulations, pointing to and touching, and grasping my head, chest, &c., in a very artistical fashion. This done, she gradually and gracefully retreated to the sofa, and then poured forth her revelations in a

continuous oration or discourse, with the eyes closed, and the head waving in a very theatrical style. Although I had not stated that I was at all out of health, and although I am not aware that I looked so, she seemed to take it for granted that such was the case, and, besides some less definite symptoms, she declared that I laboured under two formal diseases, which she named,—the one a local affection, the other a constitutional one; the latter at present *latent*, but to be speedily developed, unless a certain ptisan, to be prescribed by my fair physician, was had recourse to. She also pronounced judgment of the actual and relative powers of some of my principal organs, and, on being questioned, gave me some anatomical, pathological, and etiological details as to the local malady she attributed to me. She then said she was fatigued, and requested to be awakened.

The process of awakening being, by her own specification, *by fire*, “*par le feu*,” this was carried into execution by a lighted paper-match being waved before her face. On awaking she professed total ignorance of what had passed during her trance, and expressed much apparent surprise on being told that she had been discovering my maladies, and prescribing for them. With respect to these said maladies, I am thankful to say that they existed altogether in my fair physician’s imagination. I may also say that she was unfortunate in her judgment of the strength of some of the organs she named, their relative powers and soundness being, as far as I can judge, the reverse of her statement. Her anatomy was not

more accurate, being an embodying of the vulgar notions of the animal stricture.

### TRIAL I.—(MISS VON G.)

I visited the lady again on the following day. She was mesmerised as before; and after going through the same preparatory processes, she proceeded to unfold her splendid intentions towards my unworthy self, in a continuous strain of eloquent declamation. In the first place she assured me that all the somnambulists heretofore seen by me were impostors, and she was the only true one I had yet met with. She then proceeded to say, after a most flattering eulogy on my mental endowments—in which, as in my bodily powers, she took the weak for the strong—that, although already a *great man*, she would make me one of the greatest of men, if I followed her counsels. This magnifying was to take place through the instrumentality of certain medicinal plants, six in number, known to her, but unknown to all the world besides;—which plants were true panaceas, being curative of *all* diseases, and the knowledge of which she offered to communicate to me. Before, however, this momentous revelation was made, and while I was still expressing my gratitude for its being vouchsafed to me, of all mankind, my fair benefactress declared that she was fatigued, and requested to be forthwith awakened once more by fire. As I paid no more visits to the *Fräulein*, I know not whether

the revelation of the six roots has been made to some more fortunate person than myself ; but I believe she is still professing her art in London.

One other circumstance respecting the performances of this lady I shall here state, although I was no further personally concerned in it than being appealed to by the patient's husband as to the qualifications of the Fräulein. I can, however, vouch for the truth of the statements, as they were made to me by the physician consulted on the occasion. The patient, a lady of rank, went with her husband to consult Miss Von Gönnern, on account of being in delicate health. The lady was declared by the fair somnambulist to be pregnant, and that the placenta was placed in an abnormal position—"too far back," she said. On the following day the lady received a written communication from her somnambulist, to the effect that, since the visit, she (Von Gönnern) had, in her somnambulist state, seen what was requisite to be done, and would now, for the consideration of another fee, *change* the malposition of the placenta, and thus avert the impending danger ! These things seeming rather alarming, the family physician, my informant, was consulted, and it turned out that the lady was not pregnant at all, the catamenia having made their appearance a few days afterwards !



## REMARKS.

In taking the trouble to investigate these cases, I, of course, wished to arrive at some positive or trustworthy results, if such were attainable. In such an investigation, I had no right to take anything for granted; but I was prepared, I trust, to receive everything as true which could be proved, or as probable which had probable evidence in its favour,—whether such things were or were not in accordance with any previous opinions I might entertain. So far, therefore, from thinking it necessary to make an apology for doubting or disbelieving things which the mesmerists with whom I had to do looked upon as ordinary matters of fact, I regarded it as an imperative duty in one honestly searching for truth, under the circumstances in question, to doubt and disbelieve everything that was not proved, or that had not, at least, probable evidence to support it. Where so much imposture has prevailed, and still prevails, according to the testimony of the mesmerists themselves, it would be altogether unjustifiable to receive as authority any mere assertion of any party concerned in such exhibitions, or to admit as positive matter of fact whatever merely appeared to be so. Here, as elsewhere, Truth, if she have fair play, will vindicate herself in spite of theories or prejudices; but she has no right to expect *more* than fair play here, any more than elsewhere.



1. In the first place, then, I would remark, in regard to the three individuals whose performances are above described, that there existed not only no proof, but no probable evidence, that they were really in a mesmerised condition at all,—in other words, that they only pretended to be so, and were, consequently, impostors. The whole of their proceedings and demeanour, after rousing themselves from the short seeming slumber, were exactly those of a person awake (with the exception of the eyes being more or less closed), or were, at least, such as any person could assume. And, according to my own judgment, and that of the friends present with me, the proceedings were much more like those of persons in the normal state *shamming*, than like those of persons in a simply morbid or abnormal condition of the mind and body. And I now learn from the mesmerisers themselves (and from Dr. Engledue himself among others) that there really exists no *test* of the mesmeric state, at least no test that can be made available for those who doubt, and who require something like positive evidence before they admit as truth things most extraordinary in themselves and at variance with all previous experience. Conclusions deduced from the mere phenomena or *appearances*, in such cases, rest altogether on an assumption which we have no right to grant—viz., that the somnambulists are honest, and not shamming. Mr. Vernon says, he does not think that one in ten shows insensibility of the pupil to light. In this state of things the only test of the reality of the state would seem to be, the performance of some acts by the alleged somnambulists which it is *impossible* for persons not in this state to

perform ; e. g. the act of CLAIRVOYANCE in some of its forms ; and I think it will hardly be doubted by any impartial person, who reads the whole of the present paper, that in the trials above described no such test was supplied.

2. The only occurrence reported in these trials that bore even the semblance of an approach towards clairvoyance, is that noticed in the first exhibition of Adolphe (Trial A), where the word "*Maschalla*" was apparently read or nearly read by him while in the state of so-called somnambulism. But I reject this as affording anything like evidence of true clairvoyance, on the two following grounds :—First, because we had no proof that there was not collusion between the somnambulist and some party acquainted with the contents of the paper ; and secondly, admitting that there was no such collusion, because there exists no evidence that the word could not be read through the paper by ordinary vision.

The first of these arguments is, of course, only valid to myself, or others similarly circumstanced. It would be altogether invalid to the gentleman who wrote the word, and presented the paper, and on whose fairness I beg here distinctly to state that I throw no imputation.

I merely assert, that to render such evidence of any value, collusion must have been proved to be impossible ; and, as this was not so proved to me, or to my friends, we are authorised in rejecting the testimony.

3. But the validity of the second argument must be admitted by all. I examined the paper on which "*Maschalla*," was written, and I assert that the folds of paper

interposed between the word and the eye did not seem to me more numerous, nor the paper thicker, than in some other instances in which ordinary vision sufficed to read words similarly enclosed. As this is an important fact in relation to the general subject of clairvoyance, as practised by exhibiting somnambulists, I will mention the circumstance which first called my attention to it.

In one of the public exhibitions of Adolphe, at which I was not present, Mr. Ottley presented to him a sealed envelope enclosing several folds of paper, in the interior one of which the word "*Toulon*" was written. After much assistance from Mr. Ottley (so much, indeed, as to reduce, in my judgment, the whole process—even if the envelope had been altogether opaque—to, at most, a clever guess) the somnambulist announced the word to be, what it was,—"*TOULON*." Mr. Ottley showed me the identical paper on the following day. On examining it, I not only could not read the word enclosed, but I thought at the time that it was impossible for any ordinary vision to do so. I, however, (as I then told Mr. Ottley,) could not admit, even if it had proved true that ordinary vision could *not* decipher the word, after the great assistance given by him to Adolphe, that the deciphering the word by him was any proof of clairvoyance. But all difficulty of explanation was soon removed by the fact, that ordinary vision *could* and *did* read this very word within its envelope! A lady, to whom the paper was shown, deciphered the word at once, without mesmerism, or any other power than her natural eyesight. This was done by holding the paper in a particular manner so that the

light fell obliquely on the under surface, and was reflected through it upwards to the eye. And this lady succeeded in thus reading, through equally numerous folds of paper, words written in much smaller character than this word *Toulon*. Since Mr. Ottley acquainted me with this fact, I have tried the experiment myself, and find that, in this manner, I and others can read very well through four or five folds of letter-paper of medium thickness; that is, with three folds in front and two behind.

In the only two other instances within my own knowledge, besides this of “*Toulon*,” in which any approach to accuracy of reading was made (once by Alexis, once by Adolphe), the folds of paper were not more than four or five; while I can testify from observation that coverings vastly thinner have been and are *supposed* to be sufficient to preclude all chance of ordinary vision. On one occasion, I saw a paper handed up to Adolphe which was folded on itself *once only*, so that there was only a single thickness of paper between the written word and the eye, and yet the gentleman presenting it, I verily believe, thought he was assisting at a legitimate experiment! This fact sufficiently shows the utter unfitness of some persons to conduct any sort of investigation, well illustrates the kind of proof that passes at mesmeric exhibitions, and justifies the scepticism of those who refuse to admit all testimony authenticated only by evidence of this sort.

This deciphering of the word “*Toulon*” was regarded at the time by the major part of the company present as a striking evidence of the truth of elairvoyance, and has

been, and I doubt not still is, triumphantly advanced by Mr. Vernon as such.

Since I have acquired the knowledge of the sufficiency of ordinary vision to read through a greater thickness of paper than I was before aware of, I have recalled to my recollection several particulars of the conduct of the somnambulists which appear to have relation to this fact. The position in which they placed the papers to be read was very frequently that which is found to be the best for transmitting the light through them—viz. an oblique position in relation to the eye. It was also observed in the case of both the brothers, Alexis and Adolphe, that when the choice was left to themselves, they always selected folded papers in preference to closed boxes; and on more than one occasion I remembered that they gave the preference to the papers that were thinnest, or had the fewest folds.

4. It is, however, but fair to the mesmerists to admit that the class of cases now under consideration may allow of an explanation more favorable to their views than that just given, although coming far short of their general pretensions. We may allow, for instance, the possibility at least,—we may even admit the probability,—of a person in a mesmerised state (admitting the reality of this) having his sense of vision so sharpened as to enable him to see through a translucent medium which was impervious to ordinary vision. Such a thing would be explicable on the principles of ordinary science: it is a thing, however, altogether different from the alleged fact of such persons seeing through thick boxes, or other bodies en-

tirely opaque. The first, as I have said, might be admitted as very possible, if not very probable; the latter seems altogether impossible, according to the actual state of our knowledge of the laws of physiology and of physics. The circumstances above mentioned, however, throw great doubt on the theory that, in the cases where somnambulists *have* succeeded in deciphering words or portions of words, within folded papers—and they have apparently succeeded in doing so in some cases—they succeeded through an exaltation of the power of ordinary vision: that they have ever succeeded in reading through an opaque medium or a thick box is yet to be proved; and I believe cannot be proved.

5. All the performances of Adolphe with his eyes bandaged, and all his feats with cards, are utterly valueless, as proofs of clairvoyance. Indeed, I always regarded the card-playing exhibitions of him and his brother Alexis, so inadmissible as evidence, that I tolerated them merely to avoid the chance, or excuse, of giving offence to the mesmeriser, or discouraging the mesmerised. The facility of “playing tricks” afforded by cards—the staple of the vulgar conjuror—furnishes sufficient excuse for rejecting all evidence derived from them. But, even if the feats at cards were admissible as evidence, we have other sufficient reasons for utterly rejecting all performances with the eyes bandaged, as proof of clairvoyance.

It is well known to be extremely difficult so to bandage the eyes as to prevent all vision downwards by the side of the nose, free scope being left (as must always be the case) to the action of the eyelids and muscles of the face to



disturb the padding and bandaging. This fact has been proved, over and over again, in individuals bandaged as closely as the professed somnambulists usually are. It no doubt may be possible so to bandage as to make sight impossible. It is believed that this was the case in Trial (C) of Adolphe; and the result was the total absence of anything like clairvoyance. And many things occurred in the cases both of Alexis and Adolphe which render it extremely probable—to say the least—that in all the instances in which they *saw* while bandaged, they saw with the eyes, by ordinary vision from underneath, not through their bandages. The following are some of the grounds on which this belief is founded:—

a. It was always observable that both these young men made use of certain manœuvres calculated to prevent effective bandaging, in the first instance; or afterwards to disturb it, if it had been made effective. In the case of Adolphe, it was noticed, at every sitting, that, while the bandage was being placed across his eyes and head, he invariably, *before the knot was tied, or the bandage drawn tight, put up his hands, one on each side, and pressed the bandage against the temples, and kept them there until the knot was tied.* The effect of this manœuvre, whether intended to be so or not, certainly *was*, to keep the bandage from being drawn *tight*; as the portion anterior to the temples, where the fingers were pressed, would be unaffected by any tightening posterior to the points pressed on. Of course, such a proceeding would give facility to the somnambulist to modify the position of the bandages and

cotton, in suchwise as to afford a better chance of seeing with the eyes from underneath the bandage. I was the more struck with this manœuvre, in the case of Adolphe, because it was invariably made use of also by Alexis. Both the brothers likewise executed it in a very quiet but open and unsuspecting manner, as if it were a natural impulse to relieve the uneasiness of pressure. It *might* be so indeed, but the invariableness of its performance, and its being invariably performed in the same manner by both brothers, and the obvious utility of the thing, on the theory of imposition, all give it a considerable degree of importance in such an investigation. It was with this impression on our minds that it was predetermined at the sitting at Mr. Otteley's (C), to counteract its influence, if real, by superior care in performing the bandaging. And the result obtained, certainly strengthened greatly the probability of our theory, since, on this occasion, and *on this occasion only*, no visional manifestations occurred! At the subsequent sitting (D) the bandaging was performed, as stated, by a different hand, not aware of our theory: the temple-pressing manœuvre which we were all looking for took place precisely as before, and Adolphe played écarté beautifully!

b. In addition to this imperfect bandaging, in the first instance, it was customary for Adolphe and Alexis subsequently to disturb the bandages by now and then touching them with the hands; and they were also seen, at times, to make marked efforts with the facial muscles, *as if to alter* the state of the bandages. This might or might



not have been so ;—but, at any rate, the thing, to say the least, is very suspicious, and tends to vitiate the experiment.

c. On the occasions where the performances were unsatisfactory, it was the custom for Mr. Vernon to demesmerise Adolphe, and have him re-bandaged. This plan, of course, gave *the chance* of less effective bandaging,\* and the result sometimes was, that Adolphe saw much better on the second than on the first attempt : where effective bandaging was adopted the second time (as in C) the result was equally inauspicious as before. At Mr. Ottley's we had planned a little stratagem which might have thrown more light on this point, if it had been carried into effect. We proposed that Adolphe, on being demesmerised the second time, should on the third occasion, be bandaged *badly on purpose* ; anticipating the likelihood of good sight and capital performance being the result : but Mr. Vernou objected to the repetition of the trial, and we did not press it.

6. In all the performances with the eards it was remarkable that the objects “seen” were in the line of vision *from under the lower edge of the bandage*, and *not* in the line direct from the eyes *through* the bandage : and no objects were ever “seen” beyond or out of the first-named sphere of vision. The inference from this is obvious.

7. The great discrepance among mesmerists, as to the capacity of their somnambulists to hold communion with persons not *en rapport* with them, or to receive external

\* It gave also, of course, the chance of more effective bandaging.

impressions on the senses, is in itself a very remarkable circumstance, and one not a little suspicious. I only notice it here, however, in reference to the question of the reality or non-reality of the somnambulistic state in the case of the individuals concerned in the above-mentioned trials. In the instances of Adolphe, Alexis, and Von Gönnern, the mesmerisers admitted that the sense of hearing was open to any speaker whether in relation with them or not. In the case of one of Mr. Brookes' somnambulists, whom I saw, Mr. Brookes maintained that she was altogether unconscious of what was said around her, in the loudest tone; and when any of the party wished verbally to communicate directly with her, Mr. B. *demesmerised one ear* for the purpose! This he condescended to do for me, and the lady then heard excellently well everything I said, though previously she would hear nothing! In the case of Mr. Vernon's lady-somnambulist, (Trial E,) Mr. V. assured us that she was, in her mesmeric state, quite insensible to all that was said around her, and permitted us to speak aloud close by her while she was striving to read in my boxes. However, we had positive proof in this case that Mr. Vernon, to say the least, was mistaken, as, when she was off her guard, I repeatedly asked her questions, or made observations to her, to which she distinctly and correctly replied! This little stratagem was purposely contrived to test the reality of the alleged insensibility; and the satisfactory results were repeatedly witnessed by Dr. Sharpey, as well as myself.

8. It will not escape the observation of the readers of the preceding narrative, particularly of the Trials E, F, G

and H, that of the failures exhibited and mistakes committed by the professing seers, several were of a *positive* kind and therefore incapable of being explained away by the favorite argument of the mesmerists—"that the power, was not on the somnambulist at the time, and that a negative proves nothing." This argument must, no doubt, be admitted as valid in cases of simple non-success, where the results are null; but it is altogether inapplicable to the positive and most glaring matters of fact, committed by these people.

~ The misspelling of a word, or the only partial reading of it,—or the mistake of one letter for another or indeed any little error of this kind, would not be considered by a fair judge as seriously, if at all, detracting from the strength of the evidence; but when we see such blunders committed as in Trial F, where a word of two letters, each an inch square, was "seen" to be composed of six, and entirely different letters substituted for those actually present, we cannot explain the circumstance by any conceivable process, not inculcating the honesty and good faith of the party. In like manner, when we find, as in the Trials F, G, and H, the most obvious diseases overlooked, and others attributed which have no existence, we cannot avoid coming to the same conclusion.

9. The impositions attempted by Miss Von Gönnern, in reference to her panaceas, are so monstrous, and so palpable as to speak for themselves. The wonder is, that she could ever have expected to find any one sufficiently credulous to believe her; and yet she must have expected this. I presume that if she had encountered such a dupe,

her brother would have taken good care that the important revelation should not be completed without a "consideration" on the part of the fortunate recipient.

The following general conclusions seem deducible from all that precedes, and will not, I think, be questioned by any impartial judge :—

I. That some of the exhibitions above described bear the open and unmistakable impression of imposture.

II. That in all the cases, as in that of Alexis formerly published, (see FIRST SERIES,) wherever there resulted any positive success, the fact can be accounted for on ordinary principles, without the aid of mesmerism.

III. That all the instances of success occurred where there was, at least, a possibility of succeeding, by the ordinary exercise of the senses in their normal state.

IV. That where care was taken to render the ordinary operation of the senses impossible, failure invariably resulted.

V. That the TRIALS failed utterly in proving the possession of CLAIRVOYANCE by any of the parties submitted to examination.

VI. That no proof was afforded that these parties were really in any special abnormal condition, such as is known by the name of somnambulism.

VII. That, on the contrary, the evidence adduced renders it extremely probable that the apparent abnormal condition was feigned, and that these persons were, consequently, IMPOSTORS.

### Third Series.

GEORGE GOBLE.

WHEN completing my notes of some recent mesmeric trials, published in 'The Medical Gazette' the 18th of last month, (SECOND SERIES,) I had no intention of giving myself any more trouble on the subject, at least for some time to come. I was indeed so disgusted with the many successive impositions I had had to expose, that I was determined to let this new fraternity of mountebanks—the itinerant mesmerists—proceed on their course without further molestation on my part. If the public still chose to be gulled by such arrant cheats as I had had to deal with, in spite of the numerous warnings they had received, it was their own affair; and it seemed no one's special business to interfere between them and their enjoyments. At least, I felt that I had no particular call to do so. I had not, however, given up all intention of inquiring further into the phenomena and facts of mesmerism; and, therefore, on receiving from a most respectable quarter a pressing invitation to renew my inquiries in this field, I did not hesitate to accept it. The object of the present paper is to commu-

nicate the results obtained in this new trial with the mesmerists.

On the 29th of last month (July 1845,) I received the following letter by post. The writer was at the time personally unknown to me, but I learned from a friend that he was a gentleman of high respectability; and my subsequent intercourse with him has only served to confirm the accuracy of the statement. In the present narrative I shall speak of this gentleman under the name of A. B., as the publication of his real name might be unpleasant to him; and his extreme civility and fairness, during the whole course of our proceedings, well entitle him to every courtesy at my hands. It is hardly necessary to add that, in the disgraceful imposition which it is my business to expose, he was no further blameable than in allowing his good-nature and honesty to be too easily imposed on. His extreme facility and credulity are hardly chargeable on himself individually, as these seem inherent attributes of the genus MESMERIST.

*Letter from Mr. A. B. to Dr. Forbes.*

“SIR,—Assuming that you, like myself, seek only to ascertain the very truth on the disputed question of elairvoyance, and that you will investigate it not as an advocate seeking to make out a plausible case on one side, but as a judge looking for the right, and willing to decide according to the fair rules of evidence, I take the liberty of

inviting you to make trial of a case of alleged clairvoyance which I can produce to you.

“ I should state that I have no personal interest in the matter ; I am merely actuated by an honest spirit of inquiry, and seek the truth and the truth only. I should be equally pleased could mesmerism and its phenomena be *proved* to be false as if they were shown to be true :— I only desire to learn what is true, and that the truth, when ascertained, should be proclaimed. I am no practitioner of it in any shape. My profession is that of a barrister.

“ I have in my employ a boy who has, or appears to have, the faculty called clairvoyance ; that is, he can, when mesmerised, perceive objects imperceptible to persons in the ordinary state. He has many times read to me and to others words wrapped in many folds of thick paper, and enclosed in a card-case.

“ I ask you to see this boy, to test him yourself, fairly and thoroughly, and ascertain the fact by your own personal investigation. If you will name any morning before Friday of the present week, you shall see him at my chambers, and make the experiment.

“ But to ensure a fair trial, I must impose the following conditions :—

“ 1st. You shall bring with you two or three packets, each containing a word or figures, or a picture, wrapped in four folds of thick brown paper, sealed ; and which I wish you to prepare at home, that you may be assured beyond question that the contents are known to nobody but yourself.



“ 2d. The words or figures shall be printed, not written, the boy being illiterate. The word shall be in capital letters, and not one that is likely in itself to puzzle an illiterate reader ; the figures to be in type of a good size. The number of letters in the word not to exceed eight : the number of figures not to exceed four. The packet will be placed in a card-case of wood, which I will produce, and which you may seal also, to ensure that it is not opened.

“ 3d. Inasmuch as the faculty is affected by states of health, or some circumstances not known, a formal judgment *against* him not to be pronounced until after trial on three several days. *He has never once failed yet*, but he may do so, for the reasons named above.

“ 4th. That if he succeeds you shall admit and attest the fact.

“ 5th. That one friend of mine and one friend of yours only shall be present, and that each shall take a note of the experiment, which shall be embodied into one, and signed by all of us (if we agree) before we leave the chambers ; and that you shall publish such note in a medical journal, with any comments you may please.

“ I impose these conditions, because I can only profess that he shall accomplish what I have seen him perform. I do not *know* that he might not read writing, or sentences ; but as we are utterly ignorant of the conditions under which the faculty acts, it is safe to try that only which has been done successfully before.

“ I shall afterwards be happy to assist you in trying any other experiments you may suggest.



“ But this, if done, establishes the existence of a faculty of perception distinct from the organ of vision, and that is all we can yet affirm. A reply, naming the day and hour, will oblige,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

\* \* \*

*Temple ; 28th July, 1845.”*

I wrote in reply, that I would gladly avail myself of Mr. A. B.’s polite offer. Accordingly, I waited on him at his chambers on the following day, with the view of agreeing on the terms, and of arranging a meeting for the formal investigation of the case. I did not come prepared to enter on the inquiry then, but as the boy was at this very time in the chambers, and as Mr. A. B. expressed a desire that I should witness his powers at once, it was agreed that we should make the best extemporaneous arrangements we could, for fairly testing them. Of their immediate demonstration before me Mr. A. B. seemed to entertain no doubt whatever, any more than of their previous exertion on numerous occasions in his presence, under circumstances where, he said, there could be no collusion, cheat, or mistake.

The following additional account of the boy is extracted from the journal called ‘The Critic,’ one of the organs of mesmerism ; it expresses precisely the opinion stated to me by Mr. A. B., and I believe I may say that it was either written by himself, or certainly authorised by him. The reader is requested to notice the particular kind and

positive nature of the statements here made ; as a very singular contrast to them will be furnished, from the very same source, in the course of the present narrative. It is most provoking that all these positive and undoubted realities of marvels should at once vanish whenever the unlucky writer of this paper comes on the scene. Surely he must be bewitched, or benemesmerised the wrong way.

“ The boy is extremely intelligent and communicative in the somnambulic state. He readily answers any inquiry, and he tells us that *if any test is applied which he cannot solve he says so at once. He never guesses at an answer if he does not really perceive the object* : hence it is, that, unlike any other patient we have seen, *he has never failed in a single instance.*

“ He states further, that *it is easier for him to see through a solid body than through one composed of folds : each surface presents an obstacle and increases the difficulty of seeing.* Hence he can perceive objects within a wooden box more readily than within a couple of envelopes, and through brown paper more easily than through white paper.”—*The Critic*, 26th July, 1845.

GEORGE GOBLE, the seer, was then introduced. He is a lad of about 17, rather small of his age, but intelligent-looking. I was a little disappointed to learn, on inquiry, that he is “ an old hand ” at these things, having formerly exhibited, in public, under both Mr. Vernon and Mr. Brookes. He had only been a few weeks in Mr. A. B.’s service (as a copying clerk) ; but during that time

he seems to have been much engaged in his former vocation as a seer,—discharging the functions thereof to the boundless satisfaction of his master.

*First Day.—July 29th, 1845.*

### FIRST EXPERIMENT.

It was proposed by Mr. A. B. that the same plan for testing the boy's powers should be followed which had previously proved so extremely successful with him; and as this was fair and reasonable, I immediately adopted it. Mr. A. B. produced some common coarse brown wrapping-paper, and requested me to place any word I chose within several folds of this,—he and the boy leaving the room while I did so. Out of a heap of loose journals and pamphlets, I clipped a common word from the title-page of one, and folded it within the brown paper. Mr. A. B. then returned into the room, and proposed that I should seal the ends of the paper. I did so, turning the ends of the folded paper over (in the manner of a chemist's medicinal “powder”), and dropping the wax on them. Owing to the thickness and stiffness of the paper, the sealing was not very effectively done, the folded ends being partially tilted up, and drawing the wax along with them. The paper thus folded and sealed was then placed within a common leather or pasteboard card-case, which was neither sealed nor tied.

The boy, being “mesmerised” by Mr. A. B., after staring and winking, and twitching his limbs for a minute or so, lay down seemingly asleep; and after lying in this state for about the same period, he awoke up in the brisk, pert humour common to the so-called somnambulists. In this state he conversed readily with everybody, and showed not the slightest mark discernible by me (or, I believe, by anybody else) whereby he could be distinguished from a common waking mortal, except that he generally kept his eyelids partially closed. He took the card-case, and went through a great variety of manœuvres which occupied a long time—I should think half an hour or more—and which it would be tedious and useless minutely to describe. The greater part of the time he sat or lay upon a sofa, having a pillow at one end. The most common of his proceedings were—to place the card-case on his forehead, and press it first with his hand, then against the pillow; to breathe repeatedly and forcibly on the case, and again place it on the forehead, and again press it on the pillow; then to place it *under* the pillow, and press his face and head on this; then to place it on his hand, place the pillow on this, and again press his forehead on it, &c. &c. He also frequently, while lying on his face, put his head over the pillow, as if looking under it, and I observed that for a long time together he kept both his hands under the pillow with the card-case. I watched him as closely as I could, and although it was obvious from the position of the arms and their movement, that the hands were at work, I could not discover that at any time he opened the card-case, much less opened the paper enclosed in it; yet

it was not only perfectly possible, but quite easy for him to do so without being seen. After these various manœuvres had been continued to a very tedious length of time, George got up from the sofa, placed the case under my foot on the floor, and placed his forehead on my foot; then, after a short time, started up, and, in a sort of furor of excitement, and with a degree of rapidity which rendered it impossible to see accurately the condition of things, or to check his proceedings, he pulled open the case, whisked out the paper, and, calling out the word "COUNTRY," was proceeding to tear it open, when Mr. A. B. and myself tried to stop him, and to get the paper into our possession; and I believe we did get it for a moment; but before any examination could take place, he snatched the paper from us, in real or affected rage, and tore it in pieces. All this took place so rapidly, amid such excitement, and with so much surprise on my part, that it was utterly impossible to have any certainty as to the precise condition of the paper when withdrawn. When the top of the case was snatched off, the seal on the projecting end of the paper certainly *seemed* still there, and probably was so; but, as I have said, I cannot speak with any certainty of this, much less of the condition of the seal at the other end.

Having, at that time, no special reason for deeming George an impostor, and being somewhat influenced by the most confident belief of his honesty and of his marvellous powers entertained and expressed by Mr. A. B., I own I was at first somewhat confounded by the bold announcement of my "sealed word," which seemed to come

a good deal nearer the marvel of clairvoyance than anything previously witnessed by me. But I soon recovered my tranquillity and my scepticism, and felt that there was yet a good deal more to be done before I could be justified in changing my opinions.

The complete uncertainty as to the integrity of the seals, of course, vitiates entirely this experiment, and renders it perfectly valueless as a proof of clairvoyance; while a consideration of the previous and subsequent proceedings of George, throws more than mere suspicion on the case, and renders the explanation that immediately suggests itself to a sceptic hardly questionable, viz. that the lad had, amid his secret manipulations under the pillow, actually unfolded the paper and read the word; and that the sybilline fury of the *denouement* was cunningly assumed to prevent discovery of the broken seals.

## SECOND EXPERIMENT.

Unseen by any person, I wrote at the top of a slip of white paper (about the length and half the width of common note-paper) a single word, in large print-capitals, and folding the paper several times on itself, placed it within the same card-case. I am certain that I *folded* the paper into a flattened parallelogram, somewhat less than an inch in breadth,—as it was natural so to shape a paper to be placed within a thin card-case. And I have a positive proof of my having done so in the paper itself, still in my possession, on which I find the same word imperfectly

printed, *in reverse*, nearly an inch below the word written by me,—the impression being produced unquestionably by the *flat folding* of the paper before the word was quite dry.

George Goble took the card-case in high glee at his former success, and expressing aloud his confidence of speedily reading what was inclosed. He proceeded to execute all his former manœuvres, of which the most prominent was still that of keeping the card-case under the pillow, peeping occasionally over and under it, then bringing it forth, breathing vehemently on it, and pressing it to his forehead. After a considerable time thus consumed, he started up, placed the card-case on the floor, placed my foot upon it, and then his head on my foot, precisely as on the former occasion. He then triumphantly announced the word, spelling it—"F-o-u-l-d." I said this was not exactly the word, but was sufficiently near it to satisfy me that he had seen what the box contained. But Mr. A. B. wished him to be perfectly accurate, and he very soon pronounced the word to be as I had written it, "*Fold*." George then proceeded to open the box and withdrew the paper, which he half-unfolded, or rather unrolled, before I could take it out of his hands. I saw, however, that when the top of the case was withdrawn, *the paper was very different in form from the paper I had placed there* :—instead of being *flat* and broad as described, it was perfectly *round*, rolled on itself like a common paper-match. I immediately got possession of the paper, and, the boy being sent out of the room, expressed my conviction that the box had been opened, and the word



read by ordinary vision. The gentlemen present admitted that the paper when withdrawn from the case, was rolled on itself, as I have described it.

As this singular change of form could not possibly have occurred spontaneously, and as the secret manipulations beneath the pillow afforded the greatest facility for George's opening the case without being seen, there can hardly remain, in any mind, the shadow of a doubt that he did so, and thus obtained his knowledge of the word.

### THIRD EXPERIMENT.

It being now no longer doubtful that our seer, George, would not hesitate to see all that he could in the humble human fashion, it was necessary to take some precautions to prevent his being tempted from his high calling of clairvoyance. Accordingly, in repeating the last experiment, I made this little difference, viz. that the card-case was carefully bound round with twine, and sealed, so that it could not be opened without detection. A long trial was made with this in the same manner as before, over the pillow and under the pillow, but no announcement of the inclosed word was made. George admitted that he could not see into the box.

### FOURTH EXPERIMENT.

George accounted for his failure in the last experiment, by a change having been made in the *colour* of the paper



inclosing the word. In the present experiment, therefore, paper of the desiderated hue was adopted; but the case being as carefully corded and sealed as before, a similar result ensued: no reading of the inclosed word took place.

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*Second Day.—Thursday, 31st July.*

On this occasion Professors Sharpey and Graham, of University College, accompanied me; and we all took with us small boxes of wood, and all *sealed*, but not otherwise secured. It was laid down as a positive condition, that the breach of a seal, however effected, should be understood to vitiate that particular experiment wherein it took place.

FIRST EXPERIMENT.

George first selected a little round box, fixing with a spiral screw; one of the small boxes commonly used by seal-engravers to contain impressions of seals in wax. It was sealed on the edge, and was otherwise difficultly unscrewed. It proved too difficult for George; as after a considerable trial, he gave in, stating at the same time, somewhat carelessly, that he had “seen” in it some of the letters, but not with accuracy;—he thought they were “*har*” or “*hart*.” On examining the box, the seal was found perfect; the contained word was “*insane*,”—

having, it will be observed, only one of the three or four letters announced by George.

## SECOND EXPERIMENT.

George then selected another box—a small square box, of very slender materials, (the slightest of the lot) with a sliding lid which was not at all tied, but merely kept in its place by a single seal on its outer end, and a small drop of wax at one corner. He proceeded through the same routine of manipulations as before, retaining the box for a long time under the pillow, and, as was obvious from the motion of the arms, evidently using both his hands there for some purpose, while the peepings over and under the pillow were frequent. At one time, a sound as of a crack, or click, or snap, was distinctly heard from under the pillow. After a considerable time, he got up and placed the box on the floor and my foot upon it, and then his head upon this, as on the preceding day. He then shouted out the word “*Royal*,” sprang up from the floor with the box in his hand, and was laid hold of while in the act of proceeding apparently to draw the lid, and the box wrenched finally from his hand. On examination, it was found, that the seal, and also the drop of wax, were broken across, precisely in the line of opening, by a smooth crack, very fine, yet sufficiently perceptible. As the conditions of the experiment were here manifestly broken through, the result was declared to be

simply *null*, as, whatever suspicions we entertained, we had so positive proof that George had broken the seal, and read the word by ordinary vision. Although Mr. Graham, whose box this was, thought it the fairest course that the box should not at that time be opened at all, yet I may now state that the word was correctly named by the boy.

All the circumstances of the case being considered, no rational doubt can be entertained that George came by the knowledge of this word by opening the box beneath his screen of pillow, and reading it with his natural human eyes. On more closely examining the box, it was found that the crack or fracture in the seal remained as minute and fine, and as little conspicuous, after withdrawing and returning to its place the lid, as when it was examined when snatched from George's hand. I mention this, because it was doubted at the time by some of George's friends whether the seal was really so much fractured as must have been the case had the lid been completely withdrawn and again shut.

### THIRD EXPERIMENT.

It being now sufficiently evident that the security of a mere seal was insufficient, some boxes were tied firmly with tape, and sealed in such a manner as could leave no doubt in any mind that, if opened, they were intentionally opened. George selected one of the best secured, and, as if to astonish us at once by his honesty and bold con-

fidence, he proceeded to a desk standing in the room, placed the box within it, locked it, and gave me the key ! He then laid his face and head upon the desk, and remained motionless in this posture for some time. He then took a pen and paper, and made, first, six marks, which his friends gravely interpreted as indicating six letters in the imprisoned box ; and then wrote the letters “*cas*” twice over,—without, however, stating, or otherwise indicating (though we all inferred that such was his meaning), that these were the letters contained in the box. After a little longer silence and inaction, George opened his eyes, stretched himself, and was declared by his mesmeriser to be awake ! And this spontaneous waking-up of George was declared to be a thing unexampled, and unaccountable and wonderful. To us unlearned sceptics, it seemed a very natural and easy mode of getting out of the difficulties of his position, without owning further defeat. The box when opened was found to contain the figures 1787, and no letters.

We, the experimenters, were so perfectly satisfied with the results of this day’s trial, taken in conjunction with those of the former, that we did not propose any immediate repetition of the experiments. George had invariably failed where it was impossible to see by ordinary vision ; and all his apparent successes were either palpable deceptions, or, at most, successes where ordinary vision was not merely possible, but very probable and very practicable. We accordingly took our departure, without arranging any further meetings, George’s friends admitting that the results were at least inconclusive ; and Mr.

A. B. expressing great surprise at the unaccountable and most unusual failures of his protégé.

In the course of the same evening I received from this gentleman another polite note, part of which I print, chiefly because it exhibits the faith he still had in George's honesty, and his unbroken confidence in his powers.

“Thursday Evening.

“My dear Sir,—As I see you are proceeding with the inquiry fairly, I am very anxious that you should have the fullest opportunity for investigation, and as I go out of town for a week on Saturday morning, I should really be obliged if you could see the boy again to-morrow, either morning or evening, at your convenience; and if you could get your two friends to be present I should be so much the better pleased. . . .

“I *know* from *repeated* success in the presence of others, that the boy *can do* what he *appears* to do, and that all is *bonâ fide*: but I admit that what you have seen is open to question from one who had not seen him at other times; and therefore I am very anxious that you should satisfy yourself fully. Appoint any time to-morrow (Friday), any place, and I will meet you.

“Yours faithfully.”

I wrote in reply to this that I would wait on Mr. A. B. at a quarter past one, with my friends, and added, that I expected this investigation would produce one of two results—either that we should admit that there was more in clairvoyance than we now believed, or that we should

confess that he had to deal with an impostor in George Goble.

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*Third Day.—Friday, August 1st.*

Taught by the experience of the previous trials, we prepared ourselves better for this. We had proved the insufficiency of mere wax to obstruct George's irresistible vision, or to prevent cavil as to the mode of its exertion; we resolved, therefore, to carry with us boxes which could not possibly be opened without absolute fracture, and into which, in their complete state, the ordinary sight of mere mortal man could not penetrate. Reading the words inclosed in these, would, therefore at once establish what is called clairvoyance; while the failure to do so, would, at least, confirm our doubts and suspicions as to the powers and honesty of the seer. But we were desirous to go further than this; and to establish, if possible, not merely George's failure—the negative of non-success, but the positive fact of his roguery (for such we deemed it) and the mode of its operation. And the ingenuity of Dr. Sharpey enabled us to do so very effectively. He formed his trap as follows: selecting George's favorite subject, a card-case—which, according to Mr. A. B.'s report, had been, in his hands, almost invariably the medium of triumphant success,—Dr. Sharpey prepared it in the following manner. He took a blank card fitting the case, pasted on one side of it the word to be read, and then affixed along the end of the other side a small shelf or

ledge exactly filling up the space left between the card and the opposite side of the case. Placing the card, thus armed, within the case, he piled upon the ledge at the bottom, a series of long and narrow slips of cork, neatly cut and accurately yet loosely fitting the space unoccupied by the card. The effect of this arrangement was, that any withdrawal of the card would inevitably draw out and let fall the loose slips of cork supported on the ledge attached to it. The reposition of these slips in their original arrangement was next to impossible; and as their exact number was taken, we had the means of discovering the loss, if any of them should have been made away with, after falling from the case.

#### FIRST EXPERIMENT.

George, being mesmerised as before, and declared to be in the proper somnambulist condition, one of the same boxes was given to him which he had attempted on the preceding day. This box was composed of very thin deal. 4 inches by 2 in extent, and three-quarters of an inch in depth: it contained a single word in large print, pasted on the bottom, and not covered by anything. The lid was secured by a single screw, the head of which was let into the wood; this was concealed by a small wax-seal, partly for the purpose of preventing any attempt at unscrewing, and partly to conceal from George the impracticable character of the task set him. We had seen, on the previous day, that he got out of a difficulty which he



felt to be insuperable, by waking up into mere human potency, to the wonderment and dismay of his patrons. On the present occasion the box, bearing no more outward semblance of impracticability than the one he had *seen into* on the previous day, was taken at once, and subjected to all the usual manœuvres and manipulations, and with more apparent energy and vigour than ever. We looked on, with the utmost patience and tranquillity, for the space of one whole hour! From the obvious action of the muscles of the arms while George's hands were under the pillow with the box, from the sounds occasionally issuing from the hiding place, from the uniform increase of the physical efforts to pluck out the heart of our mystery on the occasion of a noisy carriage passing the window, &c.—not a shadow of a doubt remained on the mind of any one present (not even on that of our good friend Mr. A. B.) that George Goble was trying hard to see into my box, and that George Goble could not succeed. He was, at length, entreated to give up, and try something else. He did so; but in resigning the task he declared that he had seen three of the letters in the box—viz. *O. U. S.* On being questioned by Mr. A. B. whether he had had a mere uncertain glimpse of these letters, or a good positive vision, he repeatedly declared that he had positively seen them, and that they were in the box. Before the sitting broke up, this box was unscrewed, and the word, “EXHIBITION,” exposed. It is a rather curious chance, that among the ten letters composing this word there should be only *one* of the three seen by George!



## SECOND EXPERIMENT.

We were all now very anxious that the card-case should be put into George's hands, but were fearful of exciting suspicion by proposing it to him. Very fortunately he himself asked for a card case, and Dr. Sharpey's was handed to him, with the injunction that he must not open it, and the request of a promise that he would not do so. He gave the promise, but himself proposed that, to do away with all possible suspicion of unfair play, the card-case should be *tied up*. Nothing was said about sealing it. Accordingly, George himself tied the card-case, in the common cross-fashion, with red tape, assisted by one of our party, who carefully noticed how it was done, the place of the knot, &c. George immediately proceeded to his sofa, and went through all his wonted manœuvres, pressing the case to his forehead, and breathing on it with marvellous energy and unction. He was evidently in better spirits than during the last experiment, and openly expressed his conviction that he should "do it" this time. The *sub-pulvinary* manipulations were, of course, not forgotten, and were closely watched. After a considerable time, and often-repeated strong action of the hands, perceptible through the muscles of the arms, some of our party had a glimpse of the card-case, under the edge of the pillow, *without its ligature*, and of the ligature *without its box*! Soon after, we were struck by the sudden and unusual stillness and tranquillity of George, still prone on his field of action; his hands remained motionless in their hiding place, his head and face buried in his pillow, and we began to think he had gone

to sleep—when lo! we observed him hurriedly and repeatedly putting his fingers to his mouth, as if placing something therein, and, almost at the same moment, we observed some small fragments falling on the floor beneath the sofa, and exactly below the place of the pillow! These proved to be fragments of *cork*—mostly comminuted, but some still bearing the characteristic form and dimensions of those so ingeniously concealed by Dr. Sharpey in his card-case. Searching under the pillow, we found some more of them, and also detected the *hiatus valde deflendus* in the sofa, through which they had found their way to the carpet! The case was now clear; although George made one more effort to deceive us, by exposing the card-case above the pillow *still tied by the tape*, and finally by placing it on the floor beneath his master's foot. But our patience was at last exhausted; we laid hold of the card-case, and announcing George's roguery and its detection, we forced still more of the unlucky cork slips from his hands and from his mouth! Poor George was now fairly beaten—and he knew it; all his cunning and impudence, and all his magnetism, deserted him at once; he woke up in the most natural manner imaginable, without any demesmerising process, and with none of that gentle, progressive unlocking of the senses exhibited on previous occasions; and throwing himself on his knees on the ground, in an agony of shame and terror confessed his roguery, and implored forgiveness! In doing so, however, the meek and penitent George, like all other habitual culprits when detected, of course strenuously asserted that this was his *first offence*. It would have been very strange if he had not said so,

and it would have been still more strange if anybody had believed him. On examining the card-case, we found evident signs of the removal and re-adjustment of the ligature: the tape was all rumpled, and the knot was removed from the end to the middle of the case. The changes in the interior were still more characteristic. Many of the corklets were wanting, some were thrust in irregularly into their original place, and several pieces were wedged in on the opposite side of the card. It was clear that when George began to shake the forbidden tree, he became suddenly aware, by the falling of the apples, that he had got into a confounded scrape, and tried to repair it—partly by returning the tell-tales to their place, and partly by concealing them in his mouth, or swallowing them. But it would not do. It was fated that George Goble's fame as a Great Scer was here to terminate; he had fought his last fight, he had seen his last sight, among honest men; and although I shall not be at all surprised to find him again on the boards with his old itinerant masters, (for he is really a clever though a somewhat clumsy rogue,) it is improbable—and doubtless he felt this—that he can ever be again countenanced by any respectable mesmerist, however credulous.

*First Postscript, August 2d, 1845.*

Since the foregoing narrative was written, I have received a communication from Mr. A. B., inviting me

to carry my investigation of George Goble's powers of clairvoyance yet further,—he (Mr. A. B.) still believing, notwithstanding the boy's detected and avowed roguery, that he really does possess those powers. I am quite willing to admit, that although George is a cheat and a liar, it does not necessarily follow that he has never told the truth; and I now profess myself as ready as ever to admit his power of clairvoyance, when this is shown to me under circumstances where deception is impossible. But surely, in the present case, the *onus probandi* rests with the believers in George, and not with me.

I have above stated that, on his detection, Goble waked up from his supposed mesmerised condition. I now learn, however, from Mr. A. B., that the young rogue was *not* then awake, as we supposed, but was subsequently awakened by him in the due mesmeric form! “he awoke (he says) in an agony of tears, quite unconscious of what had passed, and remains so to this moment!” As there is, as far as I know, no positive test of the mesmeric condition short of the performance of the miracle of clairvoyance; as Goble failed to perform this miracle; as he exhibits during his so-called somnambulism not one discoverable phenomenon which could not have been most readily feigned; and as he presented to us, at the period of his confession, all the ordinary signs of a man awake,—I leave it to the decision of every unprejudiced reader of the foregoing narrative—whether mesmerist or not— which of the two following things is the most probable:— (1) that G. G. was, at any time, in the *bonâ fide* somnam-

bulic state here assumed by Mr. A. B.; or (2) that he lyingly pretended to be in this state, and to awake therefrom,—just as he lyingly pretended to see through our boxes; and that Mr. A. B. was mistaken in the one case as in the other.

In the communication above referred to, Mr. A. B. writes of Goble as follows:—"He admits that he had, *on many occasions*, when he was unable to read by clairvoyance, in his anxiety not to be considered unable to perform it, resorted to the contrivance in which the sagacity of yourself and friends so cleverly detected him, but *he assures me*, that it was done only occasionally, when the power failed him." *Credat Judæus apella, non ego*, J. F.

*Second Postscript, October 21st, 1845.*

In taking my leave of George Goble, on the 7th of August, I put into the possession of Mr. A. B. a small sealed box, containing a single word printed in large type; with the understanding that I would, according to his desire, renew my investigation of the case, whenever the box was returned to me unopened, with the inclosed word written on the outside of it. Some short time afterwards, I received a note from Mr. A. B. of which the following is an extract:

MY DEAR SIR,

"You so completely frightened the boy by your threats the other day that I have had great difficulty in

persuading him to read your box.\* To-day, however, I prevailed on him to do so, and in about *three* minutes he said that the word is "IMPLEMENTS," or as he spelled it *impelments*. This I have written upon the box, whose seals you will find unbroken; indeed, he did it standing at the desk, for ever since the affair with the pillow he will not use it at all, but reads without removing the article from our sight, at desks and tables.

I should, of course, like to have your box opened in my presence; I would bring it down to you, but do not know when you will be at home. Will you look in upon me if you pass this way, and open the box yourself? that is, provided the boy has rightly read it; for if he is wrong it will save time if you will immediately inform me so, and he shall look at it again. *But I feel great confidence from the manner of his doing it, that he has read it rightly: he named it readily, first the whole word, then letter by letter."*

In reply to this note, I informed A. B. that George's reading was not very accurate, notwithstanding his careful spelling of the word, "letter by letter." And as I have had no further report of his success, after more than two months, I may as well disclose the mystery which baffled our seer! The word so carefully read, "letter by letter," as "IMPELMENTS," happens to be

\* On detecting Goble's imposture, and while he was on his knees confessing his immediate roguery, I endeavoured to terrify him into a confession of former sins, by threatening to take him before a magistrate if he did not tell the truth.

“OBJECTIONS ;” as, I doubt not, Mr. A. B., will find when he unscrews and unseals my box !

I may here mention that this is the second time in which my unlucky star has interfered with the manifestation of clairvoyance, even when my “atmosphere of incredulity” could not poison the faculties of the seer. On the occasion of Alexis’s exhibition at my house, when he failed completely to read in the boxes and sealed papers, a celebrated medical mesmerist present, took home with him one of my envelopes, assuring me that he had no doubt whatever but that *he* could induce Alexis to read it at home, or that one of his own patients would do so. I begged that he would return the paper to me with the word written outside ; but it has never yet reached me !





## Fourth Series.

### MISS MARTINEAU'S J.

Although the illustrations contained in this last series, cannot, in strictness, be said to be derived, like the preceding, "from personal investigation," still as I was the remote if not the immediate cause of the exposure of the fallacy, and as the facts harmonize so much with the others given above, I have requested and obtained the permission of the Editor of the Athenæum, to reprint them from the pages of that Journal. I regret that my plan does not allow me to insert the admirable editorial comments on this case which accompanied the original statements.

#### I. MISS MARTINEAU'S STATEMENT.

*(Extract from the Letter dated Nov. 20, 1844.)*

The next evening (Monday, October 14th,) J. did not come up as usual to our *séance*. There was affliction in

the household. An aunt of J.'s, Mrs. A., a good woman I have long known, lives in a cottage at the bottom of our garden. Mrs. A.'s son, J.'s cousin, was one of the crew of a vessel which was this evening reported to have been wrecked near Hull. This was all that was known, except that the owner was gone to Hull to see about it. J. was about to walk to Shields with a companion to inquire, but the night was so tempestuous, and it was so evident that no news could be obtained, that she was persuaded not to go. But she was too much disturbed to think of being mesmerised. Next morning there was no news. All day there were flying reports,—that all hands were lost—that all were saved—but nothing like what afterwards proved to be the truth. In the afternoon (no tidings having arrived) we went for a long drive, and took J. with us. She was with us, in another direction, till tea-time; and then, on our return, there were still no tidings; but Mrs. A. was gone to Shields to inquire, and if letters had come, she would bring the news in the evening. J. went out on an errand, while we were at tea,—no person in the place having then any means of knowing about the wreck; and on her return, she came straight up to us for her *séance*. Two gentlemen were with us that evening, one from America, the other from the neighbourhood. I may say here, that we note down at the moment what J. says; and that on this evening there was the additional security of my American friend repeating to me, on the instant, (on account of my deafness,) every word as it fell.

J. was presently asleep, and her Mesmerist, knowing

the advantage of introducing subjects on which the mind had previously been excited, and how the inspiration follows the course of the affections, asked, as soon as the sleep was deep enough, "Can you tell us about the wreck?" J. tranquilly replied, "Oh! yes, they're all safe; but the ship is all to pieces."

"Were they saved in their boat?"

"No, that's all to pieces."

"How then?"

"A qucer boat took them off; not their boat."

"Are you sure they are all safe?"

"Yes; all that were on board: but there *was* a boy killed. But I don't think it is my cousin."

"At the time of the wreck?"

"No, before the storm."

"How did it happen?"

"By a fall."

"Down the hatchways, or how?"

"No, he fell through the rigging, from the mast."

She presently observed, "My aunt is below, telling them all about it, and I shall hear it when I go down."

My rooms being a selection from two houses, this "below" meant two stories lower in the next house.

She continued talking of other things for an hour longer, and before she awoke, the gentlemen were gone. After inquiring whether she was refreshed by her sleep, and whether she had dreamed, ("No,") we desired her to let us know if she heard news of the wreck; and she promised, in all simplicity, that she would. In another quarter of an hour, up she came, all animation, to tell us

that her cousin and all the crew were safe, her aunt having returned from Shields with the news. The wreck had occurred between Elsinore and Gottenburg, and the crew had been taken off by a fishing-boat, after two days spent on the wreck, their own boat having gone to pieces. She was turning away to leave the room, when she was asked,—

“So all are saved—all who left the port?”

“No, ma’am,” said she, “all who were on board at the time: but they had had an accident before;—a boy fell from the mast, and was killed on the deck.”

Besides having no doubt of the rectitude of the girl, we knew that she had not seen her aunt,—the only person from whom tidings could have been obtained. But, to make all sure, I made an errand to the cottage the next morning, well knowing that the relieved mother would pour out her whole tale. My friend and I encouraged her; and she told us how she got the news, and when she brought it to Tynemouth,—just as we knew before. “How glad they must have been to see you ‘at ours’!” said I.

“O yes, ma’am:” and she declared my landlady’s delight.

“And J.,” said I.

“Ma’am, I did not see J.,” said she, simply and rapidly, in her eagerness to tell. Then, presently—“They told me, ma’am, that J. was up stairs with you.”

Two evenings afterwards, J. was asked, when in the sleep, whether she knew what she related to us by seeing her aunt telling the people below? to which she replied,

“No: I saw the place and the people themselves,—like a vision.”

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

## II. LETTER FROM DR. FORBES TO THE EDITOR OF THE ATHENÆUM.

Sir,—While preparing for the press a pamphlet just published on the subject of MESMERISM.\* I requested my friend Dr. Brown, of Bishopwearmouth, to endeavour to procure for me some positive information as to the *human* manner in which the account of the shipwreck, &c. promulgated by Miss Martineau's J., in her mesmeric trance, might have reached Tynemouth. Dr. Brown himself most kindly undertook the inquiry; and I inclose his statement, and also the statement of a gentleman (Mr. Greenhow) who was present at the memorable *séance*, for publication in the Athenæum, as they did not reach me in time to appear in the pamphlet. No one, I think, after reading the statements, will entertain any further doubt as to the character of J., or as to the actual value of this “great fact” of Miss Martineau's narrative. The

\* Mesmerism True—Mesmerism False: a critical examination of the facts, claims and pretensions of Animal Magnetism. Edited by John Forbes, M.D. F.R.S. I take this opportunity of stating, that this excellent work, printed originally in the Journal edited by me, is written by my friend Mr. Noble, of Manchester. I had no further share in its composition than affording some suggestions as to the plan and supplying a few of the materials. I am the more anxious to make this statement, as the pamphlet has been translated into German, and my name affixed as the author's.

*dénouement* is precisely such as every one who has read the history of Mesmerism critically must have expected; and harmonizes wonderfully with the results obtained in the many other similar cases detailed in the pamphlet referred to. "These wonders are too generally like the *Fata Morgana*: afar off all is beautiful and distinctly defined; on approach, the very outlines have vanished, and are nowhere to be found!" The too-famous J. must now descend from her dignified position as a Seer, and henceforth take her place in that numerous band of clever damsels, who with an admired perversity of spirit, and by the mere strength of mother-wit, have contrived to make their own inventions pass with their elders and betters—with scientific doctors and erudite ladies—as revelations of a power surpassing human. For this catastrophe she must thank Dr. Brown, to whom the public are much indebted for the trouble he has taken to come at the truth.

I am, &c.

JOHN FORBES.

*London, March 14, 1845.*

### III. STATEMENT OF DR. BROWN, IN A LETTER TO DR. FORBES.

Mrs. Halliday is mistress of the house in the High-street, Tynemouth, in which Miss Martineau lodged. She is aunt to Jane Arrowsmith, an orphan, who lives in the house with her, and assists her in taking care of it. An uncle and another aunt of Jane Arrowsmith's, and of

the same name (Arrowsmith), occupy a small cottage at the bottom of the little garden or court, not above twenty yards long, behind Mrs. Halliday's house. On the Monday, the day preceding the mesmeric *séance*, intelligence was brought to Mrs. Arrowsmith's that the vessel in which her son sailed was wrecked. She was at Newcastle, and did not herself receive the news till she returned home late at night. She went on the following day to Shields to learn particulars from the owner of the vessel, and from him got those particulars—of the total wreck of the ship, of the saving of the crew by a foreign boat, of the drowning of the sailor-boy some time previously, and the safety of all present during the shipwreck,—which are set forth in Miss Martineau's communication to the Athenæum, and were the basis of Jane Arrowsmith's (J.'s) mesmeric revelations. Mrs. Arrowsmith returned with the joyful tidings of the safety of her son, between five and six o'clock in the afternoon, and then went *immediately* to her sister, Mrs. Halliday, to impart them to her. Jane Arrowsmith was in her aunt Halliday's house when Mrs. Arrowsmith told the tale, but not in the kitchen, where it was told to Mrs. H. and the other persons there. A person present when Mrs. Arrowsmith narrated her tale to Mrs. Halliday, told me that the circumstances of it were the subject of conversation in the kitchen, in the interval between its communication there and the mesmeric exhibition, and that *such conversation took place in Jane's presence*. There was *an interval of about three hours* between the bringing



of the news to Mrs. Halliday's and the *séance*, the one having taken place between five and six o'clock, the other eighteen minutes past eight, according to the information of a gentleman who was present at it, and who took notes of what passed there. The statement of the time of the arrival of the detailed information at Tynemouth and at Mrs. Halliday's house, *I had from Mrs. Arrowsmith, confirmed by Mrs. Halliday*. Jane Arrowsmith (Miss Martineau's J.) denied to me that she had a knowledge of the *particulars* of the wreck prior to the *séance*. What reliance is to be placed on this declaration I leave to the decision of others, with the remark, that if she, a girl of nineteen, evidently of good understanding and of much natural acuteness, did remain for so long a period ignorant of facts which must have been of much interest to her (for the life or death of her own cousin was involved in them),—which had been discussed in her presence,—which were perfectly well known, not only to her relations immediately around her, but, within the period, to almost every human being in the little village of Tynemouth,—then was as great a marvel effected in her person, as when, in her sibylline condition, she revealed those same facts without having herself received them through any of the ordinary channels of human information. If, then, her veracity is to be implicitly relied on, we are compelled to conclude that two miracles were in one day accomplished in her person.

The gentleman already referred to as having been present at the *séance* [Mr. Greenhow] was with me when I



held the conversation with the parties mentioned. I hope to be able to send you a communication from him respecting that *séance* by to-morrow's post.

J. BROWN.

*Bishopwearmouth, March 10, 1845.*

IV. EXTRACT FROM MR. GREENHOW'S STATEMENT,  
IN A LETTER TO DR. BROWN.

*Tynemouth, March 10, 1845.*

I saw Mrs. Arrowsmith again to-day, and questioned her further. She spoke more decidedly than yesterday, and expressed her firm assurance that Jane must have heard all the particulars of the shipwreck at least three hours before her mesmerie revelation of it. She also informed me that she knows *Mrs. W.* (Miss Martineau's lady-mesmerist) to have parted with her maid in consequence of the latter having twitted Jane with this foreknowledge, and also expressed her opinion to her mistress on the subject in very decided terms. I forgot to mention yesterday that the letter—the only one received—containing the full particulars of the wreck of the *Henry*, and loss of the boy, a short time after leaving England, was received by the owner of the vessel, a resident in Shields, on Sunday the 13th day of October, and therefore the whole of the particulars were well known in the neighbourhood on the Monday, although it does not appear that the Arrowsmiths were acquainted with them until Tuesday.

It is worthy of remark, that the proposal to inquire

about the shipwreck, on the evening of the famous *séance*, was made by *Mrs. W.* herself, shortly after its commencement; that *Mrs. W. did not take tea with Miss Martineau, Mr. — (the American gentleman,) and myself, but only made her appearance at the same time with Jane*, a quarter past 8 P.M.; and that immediately after Jane had given the statement contained in the *Athenæum*, *Mrs. W.* claimed it as an indubitable proof of the truths of Mesmerism; and at different times, subsequently, during the course of the evening, asked if it was not convincing, and appeared very evidently displeased because I expressed my conviction that Jane had divulged no fact she had not acquired through ordinary sources of information,—at the same time allowing, that *if she could prove J.'s entire ignorance of the circumstances before entering that room*, it would induce me to consider Mesmerism much more worth investigation. \* \*

V. *Attested statement of Barbara Colc, maid-servant to Mr. Wm. Reay, late owner of the ship Henry.*

Her master received the letter giving an account of the wreck of the *Henry*, on Monday, the 14th of October, and communicated to her all the particulars that she might be able to answer the inquiries of the relatives of the crew, which it is usual for them to make at the owner's house on these occasions; and she states that on the same day (Monday) *Mrs. Arrowsmith's little girl* called to inquire the news of the *Henry*, saying her mother had

gone to Newcastle. She communicated to this little girl all the particulars of the wreck; and on the following morning (Tuesday, the 15th of October) about ten o'clock, Mrs. Arrowsmith, accompanied by the same little girl, called and had recapitulated to her all the minute circumstances attending the loss of the vessel.

BARBARA COLE, her X Mark.

Signed in the presence of { MARY REAY.  
HENRY WALKER BENSON.  
MARY TAYLOR.

FINIS.

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